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**Does work-life balance have a cultural face?**

**Understanding the work-life interface of**

**Nigerian working mothers.**

**By**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Employment Research

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## **Declaration**

I confirm that this thesis is my own work and it has not been submitted for another degree.

Signature: Mariam Gbajumo-Sheriff

## **Abstract**

With the increase in the number of women working in the formal economy, there has been a growing literature on women handling multiple roles arising from work and the home. Currently there is a gap in the literature about the activities of working mothers in emerging economies, with theories and most findings concentrated on studies in advanced economies. This study therefore intends to fill part of the gap in the literature by investigating the lives of working mothers in the oil and gas sector in Nigeria, with a view of understanding their challenges, pains and gains as they navigate between the home and work spheres.

This research adopted a qualitative approach through the administration of semi-structured interviews to working mothers, supervisors and Human Resources practitioners. Using the Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) sources of conflict model, this study explored the work and family lives of working mothers in Nigeria, thereby giving a detailed view of the time, strain and behaviour-based conflict they experience, as well as appropriate coping strategies that have been put in place to mitigate the effects of such conflicts.

Findings complement earlier studies on work and family in Africa focusing on the experience of strain by working mothers in Nigeria. However, analysis from this study suggests that some of these stress-related conflicts were caused by the prevalent work culture of presenteeism. In comparing evidence of a more equal sharing of domestic tasks between couples in advanced economies, the embrace of equal sharing of housework by men and a demand for such by women in Nigeria is rather limited and slow. A striking difference on the strategies employed by working mothers in the west and in Nigeria is that what working mothers in Nigeria lose by way of government support, they gain in the form of family support.

## **Abbreviations**

EDD: Expected Delivery Date

FWA: Flexible Working Arrangements

HMO: Health Management Organisation

HR: Human Resource

HRM: Human resource management

MNC: Multinational Company

NDHS: Nigeria Demographic health Survey

SHRM: Society of Human Resource Management

WLB: Work-life balance

WM: Working mother

WLC: Work-life conflict

UK: United Kingdom

USA: United States of America

# **CHAPTER 1      INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1      Background**

Various trends have been witnessed in the world of work on a global level, one of these being the increase in the number of women participating in paid employment outside the home. In this study, this change will be examined within the Nigerian context, with mothers working in the oil and gas sector.

Historically, working outside the home was viewed as masculine and handling responsibilities within the home has been viewed as feminine. Early research into work and family has been considered separately because they were considered as separate spheres (Frone, Russell & Cooper, 1992). More recent research, however, has provided evidence of the link between the two spheres and that in fact their boundaries are permeable (Clark, 2000). With more women working outside their homes, especially within the formal sector, there is a reduction in the time available for domestic tasks and childcare (Hochschild & Machung, 2012). As a result, this shift results in families juggling the responsibilities arising from both spheres (Clark, 2000; Crompton & Lyonette, 2006; Lyonette, Crompton & Wall, 2007). Reduction in the time devoted to domestic chores by women is therefore encouraging more men to take more active roles in childcare and domestic responsibilities (Allen, 2001; Aycan & Eskin, 2005), although women still continue to invest more time in housework than men (Hochschild & Machung, 2012).

According to a report released by the Office for National Statistics on women's labour market participation rate in the UK, in 2014 two out of every five women who were not participating in the labour market gave "*looking after the family/home*" as their reason for non-participation (Penfold & Foxton, 2015:1). According to the same study, a deeper analysis of the composition of employed women shows a positive correlation between the ages of dependent children and women's participation rate; 83.8 percent of women with 16-18 year olds, 81.5 percent for 11-15 year olds and 78.8 percent for 5-10 year olds were participating in the labour market (p.7). Another recent study from the UK also found results that suggest an increase in family size reduces employment for partnered women by 14.9 percentage points (Silles, 2016).

Increased and sometimes conflicting expectations from the home and work spheres create the potential for increasing stress in working mothers, especially those with young children (Beutell & Greenhaus, 1983; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). For instance, Bianchi, Sayer, Milkie and Robinson (2012) in their study in the US found that married women spent 35.7 and 18.3 hours on average on housework in 1965 and 2009/10, respectively, whereas married men spent 4.7 and 9.5 hours on housework during the same period. Using data from across 29 countries, Baxter and Tai (2016) also reported that on average men spent between 7-9 hours per week while women spent 20 hours per week on housework. Overall, men's share of housework was 26-32 percent of the total housework. On the other

hand, mothers with young children invested less time in paid work compared with their male partners (Bianchi et al., 2012).

Furthermore, empirical evidence from the US also shows that working mothers with young children prefer to pursue working from home in order to provide personalised care for their children, and that work and family commitments are negatively affecting the participation of working mothers with young children in social recreational and physical activities (Bernardo, Paleti, Hoklas & Bhat, 2015:79).

The need for flexible working arrangements has been embraced by governments, organisations and individuals in countries around the world. However, governments and organisations differ in their level of involvement. While companies operating in western countries have moved to introducing various flexible working arrangements, governments have introduced parental leave, child benefits and legislation to regulate employment activities (Kossek & Ollier-Malaterre, 2013). However, the coverage of research in the field of work and family has been concentrated in advanced economies, hence the call by researchers in emerging economies for more context-specific research that can aid their understanding of work-life balance (Epie & Ituma, 2014; Mordi, Mmieh & Ojo, 2013). This study aims to add to this body of research.

## 1.2 The research context

Nigeria is a country in sub-Saharan Africa with an estimated population of 178,516,904 in 2014,<sup>1</sup> 49% of whom are women (British Council, 2012). More recently, the influx of women into the workplace has caused an increase in discussions about workplace flexibility (Chowwen, 2007; Schueller-Weidekamm & Kautzky-Willer, 2012; Yeboa, Ampofo & Brobbey, 2014). In Nigeria, labour force participation for adult females has increased from 39% in 1990 to 48% in 2014<sup>2</sup>. However, with up to 60% of the population living below the poverty line<sup>3</sup>, increasing unemployment and job insecurity have been a source of stress for workers (Aryee, 2005) and women have been the most affected. For example, in the second quarter of 2015, the number of unemployed and underemployed women in Nigeria was 9.6% and 21.6%, respectively, while the numbers for men were 6.9% and 15.4% during the same period (National Bureau of Statistics, 2015d). In addition, almost six million young Nigerians enter the labour market each year, with only 10% being able to secure jobs. Only a third of those who secure a job are women (British Council, 2012).

Recognising that employment policies in Nigeria are gender neutral and there are increased chances of being given equal opportunities with their male colleagues in the labour market once family demands are reduced, working mothers in Nigeria and some other parts of Africa have been re-

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<sup>1</sup> See: <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/nigeria-population/>

<sup>2</sup> See: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS?page=5>

<sup>3</sup> See: <http://www.bloomberg.com/visual-data/best-and-worst/most-stressed-out-countries>



adjusting their routine to fit organisational needs rather than demanding a change in company policies and practices (Waterhouse, 2013), especially bearing in mind that WLB is largely individualised in sub-Saharan Africa (Akanji, 2012, Waterhouse, 2013). In addition to their work and family responsibilities, working mothers in Nigeria bear the additional burden of inadequate infrastructural amenities, such as good roads and an efficient transportation system, which increases commuting time to and from work (Ajayi, Ojo & Mordi, 2015; Akanji, 2013), and an erratic power supply (Adenikinju, 2005). Taking inadequate infrastructural facilities, poverty, unemployment and other factors into consideration, Nigeria has being declared one of the countries where residents experience high levels of stress<sup>4</sup> with an average life expectancy rate of 52 years at birth<sup>5</sup>, one of the lowest in the world. As such, evidence of work-life conflict (WLC) has previously been found in studies involving working mothers who are professionals (Adebowale & Adelufosi, 2013; Balogun, 2014).

Although the setting for this study is Nigeria, other countries in this region have some similarities in respect of economic and labour market parameters, low levels of industrialisation, a collectivistic culture, a paternalistic orientation, a low level of female participation in paid employment and high rural-urban migration rates (Aryee, 2005). This

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.bloomberg.com/visual-data/best-and-worst/most-stressed-out-countries>  
Seven equally weighted variables were considered: homicide rates, GDP per capita on a purchasing-power-parity basis, income inequality, corruption perception, unemployment, urban air pollution and life expectancy.

<sup>5</sup>  
[http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.LE00.IN?order=wbapi\\_data\\_value\\_2013+wbapi\\_data\\_value+wbapi\\_data\\_value-last&sort=asc](http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.LE00.IN?order=wbapi_data_value_2013+wbapi_data_value+wbapi_data_value-last&sort=asc)

research will therefore draw upon contributions from other research in Africa.

### **1.3 Research aims and objectives**

WLB has been researched extensively for decades and the impact of work and family roles on the WLB of mothers has been immense. Although it can be argued that all employees need to balance their lives, working mothers are examined in this study to provide a holistic view of the Nigerian context since they carry a double burden: they go to work like men and they are also culturally charged with domestic responsibilities and childcare (Hochschild & Machung, 2012). Furthermore, in spite of the fact that evidence from advanced economies suggests greater involvement by men in domestic chores and a move towards greater egalitarianism in aspects of gender relations, researchers in Africa continue to find evidence of patriarchal values, orientation and practices in Africa (Etuk, Etuk & Iyam, 2013; Mordi, Adedoyin & Ajonbadi, 2011; Omar & Ogenyi, 2004). Bearing in mind that research on WLB in Africa is still in its infancy, understanding what WLB means for women will be of immense value to government, policy makers and employers in making context-specific laws and policies that will reduce the day-to-day stress experienced by working mothers in Nigeria. Furthermore, understanding WLB through the eyes of working mothers will also be useful in understanding how being employed outside the home affects relationships in the work and home domains, including the division of domestic labour.

Recent researchers on work and family have suggested the benefits of understanding context-specific research and the danger of generalising findings from advanced economies to different national contexts. Although there is some limited evidence about the work, family life and coping strategies of employees in banks in Nigeria (Ajayi et al., 2015; Mordi & Ojo, 2011) and the education sector (Ojo, Falola & Mordi, 2014; Oti, 2013), it is not clear to what extent these policies can be generalised to other sectors. It will therefore be valuable to identify the policies and flexible working arrangements prevalent within the oil and gas sector in Nigeria, to compare and contrast practices in indigenous and multinational companies and, as such, to move the research forward on the differences or generalisability of policies and practices in different sectors in Nigeria. Finally, strategies devised by working mothers at the individual level and how mothers draw on the support of organisations and supervisors in balancing work and family responsibilities will be evaluated. WLB experiences of working mothers will be explored from the conflict perspective (as discussed by earlier studies in Africa) - (Mordi et al., 2013, Epie and Ituma, 2014) and this will be discussed more explicitly in subsequent chapters. More broadly, this study intends to provide answers to the question; how do working mothers experience work-life conflict in Nigeria?

In summary, this study aims to understand WLB through the eyes of working mothers working in the oil and gas sector in Nigeria by investigating their experiences as they navigate the work and family spheres.

#### **1.4 Research approach**

Bearing in mind that research on work and family in Africa is still emerging (Aryee, 2005; Epie & Ituma, 2014), this research is qualitative and the research approach was inductive. An inductive approach provided an opportunity to “*observe specific patterns and repeated occurrences*” (Saunders & Lewis, 2012:109) within the research context and aided the drawing of “*generalisable inferences out of observations*” (Bryman & Bell, 2015:25). As such, this supports the epistemological framework of this study, an interpretivist philosophy which argues for understanding events through the eyes of the social actors (Matthews & Liz, 2010).

Semi-structured interviews were used to elicit responses from participants, as this accommodates flexibility in administering questions and gives room for participants to share relevant stories. This study was conducted in two phases: the pilot and the main study phases. The pilot study phase included working mothers and HR practitioners while the main study included three categories of participants: working mothers having at least one child under the age of eleven, human resource practitioners who were exposed to decision-making at different levels of management, especially those decisions taken by top level management, and supervisors who had least one working mother with young children within their team.

## 1.5 Thesis overview

Chapter **two** introduces previous studies on work and family in advanced economies, as well as in Africa and more specifically in Nigeria, especially as it affects the activities of working mothers. It discusses in detail concepts that are relevant in understanding work-life balance in the Nigerian context like patriarchy, stereotyping in Nigerian workplaces, presenteeism and spirituality in the workplace. Literature on the activities of working mothers at home and at work with different dramatis personae is presented, with a specific focus on understanding the division of domestic labour, work-life conflict, flexible working arrangements (FWAs) and strategies devised by working mothers to cope with work and family responsibilities.

Chapter **three** introduces concepts and theories that are relevant in understanding the home and work lives of working mothers from an interdisciplinary perspective. Role theory and work-life conflict theories are useful in understanding the challenges that working mothers encounter on a daily basis as they navigate between the home and work domains. The focal theory of the study was developed by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), based on previous research and theories on conflict. Work-life enrichment theory presents the positive side of the work-family relationship, while the division of housework theories aid our understanding of the gendered division of domestic labour, specifically in relation to the Nigerian context.

Chapter **four** explains the research methodology used for the study as well as some findings from the pilot study. It embraces the interpretivist research

philosophy which accommodates 'inner' understanding of the perspective being studied in culture-specific contexts (Benton & Craib, 2001). Due to the exploratory nature of the research, the research methods employed were qualitative, involving the administration of semi-structured interviews. Due to the limited amount of literature of work and family in Nigeria, qualitative methods provide an opportunity to gather robust information about the family-friendly policies and other practices available within the oil and gas sector in Nigeria. The study was divided into two phases: the pilot and main study. This allowed the researcher the opportunity to test the appropriateness of the interview guides within the environment where the main study took place. Based on the lessons learnt from pilot testing, the interview guide was restructured and it was decided that the final study should be conducted in the oil and gas sector because it had the most robust structures in place, in respect of family-friendly policies and informal practices, among the five sectors used in the pilot study. Towards the end of this chapter, a brief account of the challenges encountered before and during the interviews is briefly discussed.

Based on data generated from interviews conducted with working mothers, HR practitioners and supervisors, chapter **five** examines the main sources of conflict for working mothers in Nigeria using the sources of conflict model developed by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985). The later part of the chapter focuses on the Nigerian national context, describing how the presence of conflict is replicated in different aspects of the women's lives. The chapter also describes the role of various parties in WLC, including the government

and organisations (HR practitioners and supervisors) and employee representatives.

Having addressed conflicts working mothers experience in chapter five, chapter **six** addresses the individualised coping strategies of working mothers in balancing work and family spheres in Nigeria and how mothers drew on the support provided by their organisations and supervisors. Again, using the focal framework of the study, Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) sources of conflict model, this chapter categorises the coping strategies derived from the narratives constructed by working mothers, HR practitioners and supervisors into 'time-based', strain-based' and 'behaviour-based'. Spirituality and the embrace of religion was one of the coping strategies narrated by the working mothers interviewed and this seems to be an emerging trend among Nigerian working women.

Chapter **seven** discusses the findings from this study and relates these to the theories discussed in the theoretical framework and other studies in advanced economies, as well as in Africa and in Nigeria more specifically. Conflict was a recurring theme in the lives of working mothers due to family responsibilities and environmental inefficiency, based on evidence provided in earlier studies, as well as the findings from this study. Working mothers in Nigeria, like their counterparts in more advanced countries, found the navigation between the home and work domains challenging. Cultural norms affecting the division of labour at home and stereotyping at work also add to the challenges working mothers face in the formal sector in Nigeria. Empirical findings and their potential theoretical implications was also

discussed. It is anticipated that findings from this study will be particularly useful to policy makers in evaluating the direction of future policies, especially with the clamour by researchers and practitioners about the outdated nature of labour laws, when compared with the challenges now faced by working families. Limitations, recommendations and future areas for further study have also been summarised.



## **CHAPTER 2        LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1     Introduction**

Work and family, the interconnectivity between the two spheres and debates about the benefits and/or challenges from this relationship have been topics of interest to contemporary scholars (Guest, 2002). The interest in the work-family interface has been ongoing for over fifty years (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek & Rosenthal, 1964), although the focus on WLB issues for working women has been more recent (Kossek & Lambert, 2005). Research about the plight of women in the workplace has been increasing, not only because of their increased participation in formal employment and an increase in dual-earner families, but also because of the need for organisations, government and other stakeholders to determine how the needs of women can be reconciled with organisational goals.

Over many years, women have been slowly moving into formal employment, a domain formerly reserved for men, although there are still differences in women's participation in formal employment by country and by level of regional development. For example, the 2013 female participation rate was 56% in the UK and the US, whereas in Afghanistan, the rate was only 16%. In Nigeria, 48% of the female working-age population are economically active<sup>6</sup>. Further investigation, however, reveals that the relationship between women's labour force participation and a country's economic development is complicated (Verick, 2014). Verick

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<sup>6</sup> <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS>.

(2014) attributed increases in the female labour force participation rate in emerging economies partly to poverty and also as a response to economic crisis. This might explain some of the increased rates of female force labour participation in countries like Congo (71%) and Zimbabwe (83%). It should be noted, however, that the focus of this study is on working mothers in professional jobs in Nigeria, and therefore Verick's (2014) argument may not be useful.

Although there is an increased awareness about the benefits of reduced stress for both employees and the organisation (Hall, Everett, & Hamilton-Mason, 2011; Sonnentag & Fritz, 2015), research evidence suggests that employees continue to work long hours (Epie & Ituma, 2014; Mordi, Mmieh and Ojo, 2013). For example in 2014, among the European countries, the UK had a higher rate of average annual working hours per worker (1677, compared with Germany at 1371, the Netherlands 1425, Norway 1427, Denmark 1436, France 1473 and Switzerland 1568 hours)<sup>7</sup>. Working long hours implies that fewer resources, time and energy will be available for other activities competing for an individual's attention. Furthermore, working long hours has been linked to reduced employee well-being, absenteeism, employee turnover and reduced productivity (International Labour Organisation, 2011; Sutton & Noe, 2005). On the other hand, increased workplace flexibility and the accessibility of family-friendly programmes

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<sup>7</sup> <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=ANHRS>.

have been seen to increase workers' satisfaction, commitment and creativity (Aryee, Chu, Kim & Ryu, 2013; Aryee, Luk & Stone, 1998).

Empirical evidence suggests that having a family and pursuing a career can be challenging, especially for working mothers who remain the primary care giver in most societies (Beutell & Greenhaus, 1982; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). The ease with which women can enter and remain in the labour market is influenced partly by the regulations put in place by government, as well as policies prevalent at the organisational level (Aguirre, Hoteit, Rupp & Sabbagh, 2012; Kossek & Ollier-Malaterre, 2013). For example, in countries such as Norway and Finland, providing support to working families is perceived as a state responsibility, and as a result, women manage to combine work and family more easily (Crompton & Lyonette, 2006). This helps to explain why some European countries have higher female participation rates. For example, in the second quarter of 2014, Iceland, Sweden and Switzerland had the highest female labour force participation rates of 85.3%, 80.2% and 78.7% respectively. With increased evidence pointing to the challenges employees face in navigating between the home and work spheres, emphasis has been placed on the role of organisations in alleviating the burden of workers through the introduction of flexible work arrangements (FWAs). A recognised need for support from employers has been met by the introduction of various FWAs such as part-time working and telecommuting (Kim & Faerman, 2013). However, despite increased efforts by governments to make organisations accommodate the needs of working families by introducing various family-friendly policies, increased

workload and work pressures might make these policies ineffective (Sutton & Noe, 2005).

Women have been reluctant to use FWAs where continuing availability at work is synonymous with commitment (Allen, Johnson, Kiburz & Shockley, 2013). For example, parental leave generally involves women taking a period of time off work: this can be costly in terms of lost income and can sometimes lead to thwarted career advancement (Fuwa & Cohen, 2007; Stone, 2007). Stone (2007:11) claimed that career breaks provided one of the explanations for the gender gap in earnings and the small number of women in management positions. It can be argued that increased investigation into the challenges faced by working mothers and the resultant strain experienced as a result of participation in two different but interconnected spheres is important. However, increased take-up of FWAs has the potential of increasing gender stereotypes in the workplace which could negatively affect the career development of women.

Although various benefits of family-friendly policies have been identified, some of these policies have also been found to negatively affect career development, especially when women remain those most likely to take up such policies (Fuwa & Cohen, 2007).

The management of two different but interconnected spheres (work and family) by working mothers makes discussions about the division of domestic labour relevant to this study. Nigeria is an environment shaped by cultural and religious values and, as such, activities and perceptions of right

and wrong values are shaped by the three dominant religions: traditional, Islam and Christianity (Mordi et al., 2013; Okpara, 2006). It should be noted that Christianity and Islam preach that the home is the ideal place for a woman where she can execute her responsibility to her family and this belief is enhanced by the patriarchal nature of Nigerian society (Odunaike, 2012). Bryceson (2010) also argued that in Tanzania, women who resisted subordination by their husbands by seeking employment outside the house experienced subordination in the workplace. In Nigeria, like many patriarchal societies, women are the primary caregivers and they are also saddled with the responsibility of doing the majority of domestic chores. Although it could be argued that women remain the primary caregiver in many cultures, patriarchal orientation, which has been strengthened by institutions, makes sharing of domestic labour almost non-existent in many African societies (Mapedzahama, 2014).

Apart from the impact of religion on gender identity in Nigeria, the 2008 global economic crisis which affected western economies also had a spillover effect on the Nigerian economy, mainly because Nigeria is an import-dependent country. As such, this resulted in job losses and created more job insecurity in Nigeria.

Generally, this study will be restricted to the WLB experiences of working mothers in the oil and gas sector in Nigeria because earlier studies in the field of work and family have documented WLB experiences in the education, manufacturing and banking sectors in Nigeria. Studies in the oil and gas sector in Nigeria is still at an embryonic stage and as such, it is

believed findings from his study will fill part of the gap in research. More specific explanations will be provided in later parts of this chapter as well as in subsequent chapters.

As stated in chapter one, the aim of this research is to understand how working mothers experience work-life conflict in Nigeria. Therefore, it will be insightful to understand the WLC experiences of working mothers and know whether working mothers in this study experience the intense level of WLC reported in earlier studies in Nigeria (Epie & Ituma, 2014; Mordi et al., 2013). This will be one of the contributions of the study.

There is very little known about WLB and WLC in emerging economies, with previous research having concentrated on developed countries; the measures used have also been developed in these countries and may not be applicable in other contexts. This study therefore intends to fill part of the gap in the literature by investigating the lives of working mothers in the oil and gas sector in Nigeria, with a view of understanding their challenge, pains and gains as they navigate between the home and work spheres.

This chapter introduces some of the key literature relevant in understanding the role that working mothers play at home and in the workplace. Specifically, the chapter starts with definitions of work-life balance and will thereafter discuss some concepts that will be useful in understanding the Nigerian environment, such as the patriarchal structure, presenteeism at work, the importance of spirituality in the workplace and the division of domestic labour. The later part of the chapter will discuss some relevant themes, drawing together literature mostly from within Africa

and at times from western countries where the drawing of inferences is considered useful. The chapter concludes with a summary.

## **2.2 Definitions of Work-Life Balance**

Terms such as “work-life” and “work-family” have often been used interchangeably in research on work and family roles. However, “work-family” has been described as restrictive because it is recognised that people have other interests and responsibilities apart from the family. The term “work-life” has been discussed to allow for the inclusion of people without children or family (Kossek & Ollier-Malaterre, 2013). In the course of undertaking this literature review, it was discovered that some researchers use the term work-life, whereas others use work-family. Efforts will therefore be made to define the concept according to the preferences of these authors.

Work-life balance has been defined as “*satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum of role conflict*” (Clark, 2000). An alternative definition suggests “*work–family balance as accomplishment of role-related expectations that are negotiated and shared between an individual and his or her role-related partners in the work and family domains*” (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007:466). However, various researchers have relied on different arguments to justify their preferred term as the most appropriate. For example, researchers have questioned the concept of “balance” which presumes an equal sharing of time among roles and argue that “work-life integration” may be more appropriate as it presumes that

resources are allocated effectively to achieve optimum output (Whitehead, Korabik & Lero, 2008). This notion was questioned by Eikhof, Warhurst and Haunschild (2007) who used supporting literature to argue that working long hours could indeed be a source of satisfaction for some employees for promotion prospects, increasing financial gains or 'as an escape from domestic stress' (p. 330). Fagan, Lyonette, Smith and Saldaña-Tejeda (2012), however, have argued that, although possibly misleading, the term work-life 'balance' is prevalent in policy debates. For this reason, this study will also use "work-life balance" because of its general applicability (Fagan et al., 2012) in both western and African literature.

### **2.3 Intellectual positioning of the study**

The term "work-life balance" was believed to have emerged, based on the perception of conflict between work, family and other activities of interest to an individual (Eikhof et al., 2007). As such, debates about WLB are believed to have developed from the need to tackle WLC (Mordi et al., 2013; Clark, 2000). For example, Kossek, Lewis & Hammer (2010) reported that work-life initiatives started in the United States in the late 1970s due to workers' increased mental and physical strain and the debate went further in the 1980s to include supports for workers caring for children. In the UK, discussions in the political sphere about how to support families, employment and more importantly, the development of legislation to support WLB policies, became prominent in the 1990s in order to help employees cope with the responsibilities/demands arising from occupying multiple roles



(Lewis, Anderson, Lyonette, Payne & Wood, 2016). In a different vein, another researcher has argued that the objective of introducing flexible working is to ensure workers have control over their time (Aryee et al., 2013), whereas not having control over time could also lead to WLB (Kossek & Ollier-Malaterre, 2013).

The initial focus of the study described here was WLB. However, a review of studies on WLB in Nigeria suggests that the debate has been approached from a position of conflict due to the contextual challenges of integrating work and family life in Nigeria (Ajayi et al., 2015; Mordi et al., 2013). As such, the evidence that will be discussed in subsequent sections of this chapter suggests that WLB is understood differently in different cultural contexts and that WLB is still an emerging concept in many emerging economies, including Nigeria. Based on the paucity of evidence on WLB in Nigeria, and like earlier studies in Africa (Mordi et al., 2013; Ajayi et al., 2015), the experience of WLB in Nigeria will therefore be approached from the conflict perspective. In addition, other themes that are considered relevant in understanding WLB in Nigeria will be discussed.

Extensive research on WLB in western countries has also addressed the importance of institutional-level support (Fuwa & Cohen, 2007). Such support could include national-level legislation and state support (e.g., parental leave, eldercare and childcare benefits) and organisational support through the incorporation of work rescheduling options (like term-term working, telecommuting and compressed work-week options) (Kossek et al., 2010). While western literature has been more specific about what

constitutes WLB or family-friendly policies/practices, WLB policies are yet to be robustly understood from the Nigerian perspective: institutional and organisational-level supports are fairly marginal and WLB has been discussed mainly at the individual level (Akanji, 2012; 2013) . Based on the divergence in perceptions of WLB in western and African contexts, African researchers have questioned the applicability of the western concept of WLB in the African environment (Mordi et al., 2013; Aryee, 2005). In order to understand the experiences of working mothers in Nigeria, the research will focus on state and organisational-level policies and practices in Nigeria, as well as the individual-level strategies employed by working mothers. WLB policies and practices in the form of flexible working arrangements (FWAs) in western countries will only be discussed where necessary.

#### **2.4 Barriers to and facilitators of WLB among working mothers in Nigeria**

The concept of work-life balance cannot be properly understood within the Nigerian context without a discussion around patriarchy, traditional gender relations in Nigeria, division/outsourcing of domestic work, the challenges that professional women have to face in the workplace to prove their commitment and the role of religion/spirituality in people's personal lives. These themes will be discussed in subsequent sections.

### **2.4.1 Patriarchy and the importance of institutions in Nigeria**

In understanding the relationship between work and family, it will be useful to discuss briefly some of the early arguments by researchers. One of the earliest proponents of the structural functionalist school, Talcott Parsons, argues for a need to recognise the separation of institutions and that such institutions work best when role actors specialise in activities where they have the most strength (Parsons, 1942). Building on his argument, Parsons (1956) related this theory to the work-life interface, where work and family are perceived to be separate spheres and social actors (men and women) are therefore believed to be more efficient when each specialises in one of the spheres, emphasizing the breadwinner/home-maker model. According to MacDermid (2005:21), structural functionalism proposes that *“families, institutions, and society all work best when men and women specialise their activities in separate spheres, women at home doing expressive work and men in the workplace performing instrumental tasks”*.

Although historically, women in Nigeria have been engaged in economic activities whose financial gains have benefitted their families (Chikovore, Makusha, & Richter, 2013), the arguments of the structural functionalists might still be applicable in traditional societies where men are socialised into handling issues in the public domain; as such, the main responsibility for providing for the family rests upon the man while the woman is expected to be responsible for housework and childcare. However, more recent data has shown an increase in the number of female breadwinners: for example, a study in the US shows that 40% of families with children under the age of

18 have women as either the sole or the primary financier of the family (Wang, Parker & Taylor, 2013) and nearly one third of working mothers with dependent children in Europe are now breadwinners (Cory & Stirling, 2015). As a result, the continued relevance of structural functionalism in advanced economies becomes highly debatable.

The role of institutions in instilling a patriarchal or egalitarian orientation within a society has also proved relevant in the discussion on the work-family interface (Crompton, Lewis & Lyonette, 2007). For example, Pocock (2003:240) reported that patriarchy is prevalent in Australia and the government has resisted the entry of women into paid employment. As such, fathers are much more likely to be praised when they provide care beyond what is considered “normal” in Australian communities, unlike mothers.

Aina (1998:6) defined patriarchy as *“a system of social stratification and differentiation on the basis of sex, provides material advantages to males and simultaneously placing severe constraints on the roles and activities of females.”*

Nigeria is a society with enshrined patriarchal values which remain pervasive in most of its institutions. As a result, men are accorded more respect and power in social, economic and political roles (Aina, 1998). The division of labour was predominantly based on sex and, as such, maintenance activities within the home were mainly allocated to women. Yeboa, Ampofo and Brobbey (2014:294) stated that *“traditionally womanhood is largely associated with marriage and childbirth while*

*masculinity is associated with fatherhood, sexual potency and seniority”.*

The prevalence of patriarchal orientation in various institutions within the Nigerian environment implies that workplace structure tends to favour the masculine culture and sharing of domestic labour between couples is still not widely embraced in many Nigerian homes.

While the structural functionalist school has been useful in understanding work and family relationships at the individual level, it is useful to consider the role of institutions as mechanisms that govern the behaviour of individuals and organisations. In theorising the rationale behind companies' adoption of family-friendly programmes, some researchers have argued that organisations may adopt programmes that have worked in similar organisations or countries, and Sutton and Noe (2005:155) called this practice 'one-stop shopping'. In line with the arguments of institutional theorists, the embrace or otherwise of family-friendly programmes is shaped by institutional pressures (Den Dulk, Groeneveld, Ollier-Malaterre & Valcour, 2013) which may be normative, mimetic and coercive pressures (Sutton & Noe, 2005:155). According to Sutton and Noe (2005), normative pressures are pressures mounted by internal groups within the organisation, for example, pressures put on management to implement a particular family-friendly policy, mimetic pressures are those that occur as a result of imitating a competitor, while coercive pressures are those mounted by government to ensure companies have put in place or changed some of their family-friendly policies. Research has identified the absence of coercive pressures from government in Nigeria and sub-Saharan Africa as

one of the factors responsible for the slow embrace of WLB by companies operating within these contexts, especially with the weakening of labour unions and limited interference from government in the employer-employee relationship (Ajayi et al., 2015; Mordi et al., 2013). The next section discusses negotiation at the family level.

#### **2.4.2 Understanding gender relations in the Nigerian context and from a comparative perspective**

As countries vary in the extent of their involvement in providing support to working families, studies have provided evidence that macro-level policies affect the distribution of housework among partners, with a more equal division of chores in countries with egalitarian views and an unequal division in economies where the patriarchal orientation still exists (Fuwa & Cohen, 2007). For example, countries with policies in place to ensure gender equality (e.g. public childcare or the provision of parental leave) also have a more egalitarian orientation. Thus, gender equality at the micro-level has been seen to be influenced by gender equality at the macro-level (Fuwa & Cohen, 2007).

The role of culture in gender relations in Africa has been viewed by researchers from two different perspectives. Some argued that women have been marginalised in the home and the subordination of women has moved outside the home into various spheres of society such as the workplace, as well as the right to own land and access to credit facilities (Uroh, 2004, Dibie, 2009), as such, patriarchal African culture has been understood to be the main determinant of female subordination (Aina, 1998, Aluko, 2009). Others

have argued that the concept of “housewives,” as described in western literature, does not adequately portray the role of the Nigerian woman because *“there was no strict separation between reproductive and productive roles of men and women in Nigeria”* (Oyekanmi, 2005) and the breadwinner/home maker roles are in fact complementary (Aina, 1998).

Gender roles in Nigeria, like in most traditional societies, are clearly defined. Across cultures, women’s roles can be generally classified as parental, occupational, conjugal, domestic, kin, community and individual, although the importance placed on each of these roles varies (Coltrane, 2000; Hartmann, 1995; ILO, 2012; Oyekanmi, 2005:60). For example, marriage in Nigeria is seen as a union between two families, rather than between two people, and as such the wife is responsible to her husband’s family (Aina, 1998, Dibia, 2009). Also, according to Oyekanmi (2005:60),

*“Among the Igbos of Eastern Nigeria a woman who gives birth to eight children is honored at a party at which her husband kills a cow and the woman eats the neck of the cow. Thereafter she is given special social recognition in the community. Whereas among the Yoruba of Western Nigeria, a woman who gives birth to twins or triplets, irrespective of her parity, gets an equivalent honour.”*

Historically, women have been active participants in economic and political spheres (Olurode, 1990, Worsfold, 2011). For example, documented evidence from African historical literature suggests that, in addition to their economic activities, women also took up leadership roles and represented women in government (Awe, 2005). In West Africa, for example, female

governance has been encouraged in the past (e.g., the Iyalode of Yorubaland in the South-Western part of Nigeria, the royal princesses of the Kanuri, Borno state in North-Eastern Nigeria (Aina, 1998) and the Queen mother of the Ashanti in Ghana (Awe, 2005). In the Eastern part of Nigeria, women's associations traditionally protected the interests of women, looked after their welfare and ensured that they were respected, in addition to protecting women from abusive husbands. These associations also served as a voice to lobby against decisions taken by male elders that did not favour women and, where needed, they called for strike action (Amadiume, 1987; Berger & White, 1999:85).

In spite of African women's historical participation in leadership roles, the phasing out of women in such leadership positions and public roles was argued to have commenced during the advent of colonialism and continued with increased globalisation and the adoption of western values (Adebayo & Udegbe, 2004). As such, most of the positions reserved for females have been dropped over time (Awe, 2005). This is not particularly surprising in a patriarchal culture, and most employees in management positions are men. Women in leadership roles who resist any undermining of their authority are often seen as 'deviant', especially because this behaviour is at variance with perceived femininity (Burke & Major, 2014; Chovwen, 2007). Chovwen (2007:72) also reported in her study of women in male-dominated occupations in Nigeria that women perceived as disciplinarians were described with unpleasant names. Other evidence from Nigeria also suggests that women in management or leadership positions are likely to



have their authority questioned by male subordinates (Adebayo & Udegbe, 2004), especially because of the perception that they are being ambitious in male spaces (Chovwen, 2007). This phenomenon is not unique to African countries, however. In a study conducted in the USA by Heilman and Wallen (2010:664) which aimed to determine reactions to women who had achieved success while working in a male-dominated job, the authors reported that successful women in top positions were less favoured as bosses and were often ostracised.

#### **2.4.3 Division of domestic labour.**

One of the consequences of socially constructed roles is that some societies believe that 'behind the scene' activities, i.e., domestic activities and childcare, are perceived to be a part of the feminine sphere, while front-line activities (activities undertaken outside the home), are viewed as masculine. Although there might be variation in countries' perceptions about ethnicity, race and gender equality, there are similarities across many countries that mothers are the primary caregivers (World Bank, 2001).

Research into housework and childcare activities has been gaining prominence over the years (Burke & Major, 2014; Chiloane-Tsoka, 2012; Hall et al., 2011; Schueller-Weidekamm & Kautzky-Willer, 2012). This is partly due to the increased participation of women in paid employment and a corresponding decrease in the time available for domestic activities (Etuk et al., 2013; Gupta, 2006; 2007). In the past decade, due to increased female participation, there has been a decrease in the number of hours

women devote to housework. Although there has been a reported increase in the number of hours men devote to such activities, women continue to do the lion's share of household chores (Kan, Sullivan & Gershuny, 2011). An in-depth assessment has been made of the energy and time involved in such activities which were formerly not regarded as work (MacDonald, Phipps & Lethbridge, 2005), especially because the value of these services was not quantified and was not regarded as contributing to the economic wealth of society (Beneria, 1981). Despite continued patriarchal values in parts of Asia and Africa, research from emerging economies is providing evidence of a power shift from the traditional sexual division of labour towards greater egalitarianism (Ramu, 1987, Smit, 2002). However, more success has been achieved in advanced economies than in emerging countries (Aluko, 2009, Smit, 2002).

The extent and nature of household chores engaged in by women varies across countries, depending on their level of gender egalitarianism, development and stage of industrialisation (Kan et al., 2011; Van der Lippe, Voorpostel, & Hewitt, 2014). In advanced economies, where electrical equipment is often used as a substitute for household chores, rather than manual cleaning, the time and level of energy spent on housework is more limited (Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer & Robinson, 2000) than in emerging economies (International Labour Office, 2011). Furthermore, in advanced economies, some of the household work has been transferred outside the home, e.g., the wide availability of pre-packaged food means that many meals can be bought pre-prepared from supermarkets or grocery stores.

Shopping has also been transformed in western countries, to the extent that many purchases can be made online and then delivered to the home. However, in emerging economies like Nigeria, women still do basic chores manually and the emphasis remains on domestic production within the home, with many hours required for the most basic tasks such as fetching water, wood gathering and food processing (Beneria, 1981). Shopping is still done on the whole by visiting markets or stores personally. For example, in a study of Nigerian working-class, part-time postgraduate students and additional members of the public, Ayo (2006) found that most respondents were not doing online shopping: although shoppers may source for product information online, purchases still tend to be done by visiting stores. Ayo (2006) attributed this trend partly to the fact that Nigeria is still a cash-based economy.

Food is an essential aspect of the African culture (Aryee, 2005). Like in other countries, food preparation in Africa, especially in preparing traditional dishes, involves considerable time and effort (Cairns, Johnston & Baumann, 2010). For example, Cutrufelli (1983:112) explained the elaborate procedure required to prepare cassava which is a staple food in Ghana. It involves peeling, wrapping in leaves and being kept under water for two or three days. In Nigeria, the case is similar, e.g., in making bean cakes, which involves soaking, peeling the skin and grinding the whitish inner part of the beans, after which some other items are added to the paste which is then fried. A paste-like mixture is sometimes prepared to accompany this. Just like other household chores, researchers have pointed to the fact that food

preparation within the household has been perceived as a feminine task and is one of the ways that culture encourages unequal gender relations (Cairns et al., 2010).

Apart from food preparation, the responsibility for household chores is another aspect of domestic labour which is heavily gendered. Increased economic activity and financial contribution of the woman to the well-being of the family has not translated into a more equal distribution of the workload within the home, even in economies where dual-earner households are prevalent (Coltrane, 2000; Lyonette & Crompton, 2015; Windebank, 2007). There is evidence from western countries that men are more likely to do more childcare now, but there is less improvement in sharing housework (Lyonette & Crompton, 2015). Researchers have also shown that there is a slight shift in the division of household tasks, particularly in couples with full-time working women who are spending less hours in household work, while their partners are contributing more (Kan et al., 2011; Lyonette & Crompton, 2015).

Based on cultural and patriarchal values, men doing household chores and childcare activities are typically unwelcomed in Nigeria and more generally in Africa as a whole (Aryee, 2005). Empirical evidence from three African countries shows that in a twenty-four hour period, time spent in domestic and care work in Benin, Madagascar and South Africa was 14.4%, 15.3% and 15.8% for females while males spent 4.7%, 3.3% and 5.2% respectively during the same period (Economic Commission for Africa, 2009). This data also provides further evidence to support the argument that women continue

to invest more time in non-market economic and domestic activities than men. The situation for Nigerian woman is no different: despite the increase in women's labour force participation rate and the emergence of female-headed households, women are still primarily responsible for childcare and domestic tasks (Aryee, 2005). Although there is a paucity of longitudinal data on the time use of couples in Nigeria, data on household activities (from 2010-2014) show that women spend 10.11 hours on cooking and 17.23 hours on childcare, while men spend 6.62 and 9.87 hours on the same activities respectively during the same period (National Bureau of Statistics, 2015a). The typical sexual division of labour was displayed here as women spent more time doing "feminine tasks" like childcare, sweeping, cooking and washing dishes than the males.

Discussing the division of domestic labour theories will provide a framework that explains the gendered nature and the power relationship within the home. The gendered division of labour theories will enhance our broader understanding of the division of household labour and the reasons why women, especially married women or mothers, still do the bulk of unpaid labour. This will be discussed under the economic exchange and the doing gender theories.

According to economic exchange/relative resources theory, the more economic resources a person controls within the household, the less he or she is likely to do in terms of household chores (Becker, 1991; Blood Jr & Wolfe, 1960). This argument is usually used as a justification for women doing the bulk of housework: generally, men earn more than their partners,

thereby increasing their negotiating power to do less housework. As such, the female allows her male partner to do less housework because she earns less and therefore controls fewer economic resources. This position holds when one of the parents has to be at home to handle childcare responsibilities: ordinarily the person earning less sacrifices their working role to some degree, by either working flexibly or leaving paid work altogether (Gupta, 2006).

In explaining why women continue to engage more in childcare and housework, while men engage in market-related activities across societies, Becker (1991) argued that biological differences have given males and females different comparative advantage; females have comparative advantage within the home in childcare and housework-related activities while males have comparative advantage in market activities. The concept of gender display was introduced into the quantitative literature on the domestic division of labour by Brines (1994). Doing gender theorists however argue that gender is regarded as actively accomplished and negotiated in interaction. Building on the work of earlier researchers, Bittman, England, Sayer, Folbre and Matheson (2003) further argued that societal norms of expected gender behaviour could lead women to do more household chores than men, even when women earn more. In evaluating the impact of a woman's profession on the extent of housework done by her spouse in African countries, results have varied. Smit (2002:408) found that husbands with wives who were employed in professional occupations in South Africa were less likely to do household chores but were more likely to

be engaged in emotional work, defined as “*the active, rational attempt to manage one's own emotions to bring about a discernible facial, bodily and/or verbal 'display' in the endeavour to enhance the spouse's emotional well-being*” (2002:403). Mapedzahama (2014:43) also found in her study investigating Zimbabwean and Australian working mothers navigating between the home and work spheres that Australian mothers said that their husbands were sharing in household chores although they still did the bulk of the work, whereas women in Zimbabwe reported that men “*virtually did not do any share*” of the household chores or childcare-related responsibilities. The trend that has been noticed in other studies on work and family is that, unlike research in advanced economies where women constructed narratives around sharing, the notion of sharing was absent in the African literature (Aryee, 2005, Asiyanbola, 2005, Odunaike, 2012). These arguments have been supported by evidence that suggests that, in cases where couples earn similar wages or women earn more, women still do the bulk of domestic chores (Hochschild & Machung, 2012). Irrespective of the orientation of the ideal “egalitarian families”, women are still expected to take care of many household chores and childcare responsibilities. While economic exchange theory could contribute to an understanding of the gendered division of housework in the Nigerian context, ‘doing gender’ has more support, as normative gender behaviour is emphasised at the different institutional levels within society.

In addition to the burden of housework and childcare experienced by women across many cultures, Nigerian women also spend more time doing

household chores as a result of infrastructural constraints such as inefficient road networks, an unstable power supply and the limited use of mechanised domestic appliances (British Council, 2012; Mordi & Ojo, 2011; Okpalaobi, 2011). Literature on time use for household activities within the Nigerian environment still makes reference to the use of firewood and kerosene as a source of fuel for homes and the fetching of water as opposed to getting water from taps (Blackden & Wodon, 2006; Nadeem, 2000).

Although many researchers have been recommending more equal sharing of domestic and childcare responsibilities between spouses in order to enable women to contribute more in paid employment, biological differences and societal expectations might preclude this from happening. As an alternative to sharing as prevalent in western countries, literature has also provided evidence of outsourcing of domestic tasks either to near or distant relatives or to the market, especially in Africa. This will be explored in the next section.

#### **2.4.4 Subcontracting of domestic responsibilities**

Apart from the notion of sharing, literature on domestic labour in western countries (Lyonette & Crompton, 2015; Heisig, 2011) has discussed the outsourcing of housework (Heisig, 2011). A study in America provided evidence about outsourcing of housework, baby-sitting pets, grocery purchases and even Christmas shopping due to the proliferation of women in formal employment (Ehrenreich, 2003). Outsourcing in western economies has been mostly linked to affluent families, or families devoting



more time to paid work (Craig & Baxter, 2016). For example, Heisig (2011) in her study of thirty-three countries reported that as household income rises, time devoted to housework reduces because of the ability to afford electrical appliances or the outsourcing of domestic tasks to housekeepers. Craig and Baxter (2016) also reported in Australia that when women earn more they are likely to spend on cleaners and dining out while an increase in men's earnings increases the likelihood of using different forms of outsourcing (gardening, maintenance) in addition to house cleaners. Smit's (2002) study also provided evidence that men living in households where the service of full-time domestic helps was being used were significantly less likely to do household chores, compared with men who live in households where such services are used occasionally. This resonates with evidences reported in another research conducted in Africa on the use of domestic help (Muasya, 2014) with men doing fewer household chores, especially when compared with men in advanced countries. In Africa, the movement of families to urban centres for better paying jobs has resulted in family members often being unable to draw on extended family members for social support (Muasya, 2014). As a coping strategy, middle-class families in Sub-Saharan Africa rely on the services of domestic help, commonly referred to as 'house-helps,' to carry out housework and childcare responsibilities (Mapedzahama, 2014). Domestic helps are mostly people with disadvantaged backgrounds or they are recruited from rural areas (Akanji, 2012). As a result, their bargaining power is usually low and their services cheap (Aryee, 2005). Their job descriptions are rather general

and rely upon the requirements of their employers and, unlike professionals, their contracts are not covered or protected by law. As such, the norm is that they take up multiple roles; a nanny could be taking care of cooking, laundry, cleaning and childcare responsibilities (Aryee, 2005). Due to the informal nature of their recruitment, they are not always reliable and often leave at short notice. This is in contrast to their terms of employment in developed economies where roles are usually specific and well-defined: a nanny being in charge of childcare and a house keeper in charge of cleaning (Annor, 2014). The remaining part of this chapter will discuss broader issues affecting WLC.

#### **2.4.5 Stereotyping in Nigerian organisations**

The private (home) and public (work) are connected and influence each other (Beneria, 1981; Clark, 2000; Warhurst, Eikhof & Haunschild 2008). Therefore, although research tends to focus on women in male-dominated professions, it can be argued that gender stereotyping is not restricted to a particular profession or position within the organisation (Chowwen, 2007). Working in supportive roles at home, women may be expected by their male colleagues to similarly occupy subordinate/supportive roles in the workplace.

At the company level, there has been evidence in Nigeria of women being discriminated against, based on family background, and one example of this is what Okpara (2006:227) referred to as the “*get pregnant, get fired policy*”. Chowwey (2007:75) also described how a woman was transferred from one

branch of a bank to another five times within four months. This, it was argued, resulted from her having babies too frequently, which was against the bank's corporate image. Generally, in both western and developing countries, workplaces have been constructed as gendered spaces and research has previously provided evidence of a connection between masculinity and advantage in the workplace (Anugwom, 2009, Britton, 1999) and the association between low level jobs and femininity (Burke & Major, 2014; Pearce, 1978). Stone's (2007) study in the United States of America investigated why professional women leave their careers and become stay-at-home mothers. Apart from time for family concerns, stigmatisation for attempting to hold on to a career after becoming a mother was cited as a major factor in these decisions. According to Stone (2007:19):

*“these women had alternative visions of how to work and be a mother, yet their attempts to maintain their careers on terms other than full-time plus were penalised, not applauded; it was quitting that earned them kudos.”*

Britton (1999) argued that the work done by women is valued less, irrespective of the positions they occupy. In another study involving 196 undergraduates from two universities in the USA, job applicants were evaluated based on the criteria of gender and marital/parental status (Fuegen et al., 2004). The research aimed to compare the perceptions of mothers, compared with fathers, and parents compared with non-parents in workplaces. Results showed that parents were perceived to have less time commitment than non-parents and female parents had the least likelihood

of being hired or promoted (p. 748). Mothers were also judged harshly in terms of employment standards, relative to fathers, suggesting that working mothers may need to do more to prove their competence in the workplace (Chovwen, 2007) and at times learn to behave like men (Chiloane-Tsoka, 2012). Chiloane-Tsoka (2012: 4960) also highlighted that, despite efforts being made by the state to embrace diversity and gender equality, only 20.5 percent of women and 12 percent of men in the study strongly disagreed with the statement that a stay-at-home mum is better than a woman who works outside the home. Examples such as those described above suggest that there are persistent negative stereotypes against working mothers who have to work particularly hard to counteract these, especially in a country like Nigeria where most policies are gender-neutral (Aluko, 2009). Having the 'ideal worker orientation' (Lewis, 1997) and using males as role models might increase the pressure on women to stay late in the office to demonstrate commitment and loyalty. This may lead to 'presenteeism', a concept which researchers have linked to a show of commitment. This will be discussed in the next section.

#### **2.4.6 Presenteeism in the workplace**

Although empirical evidence has established the benefits of family-friendly programmes and work flexibility options to employees and employers alike (Aryee et al., 2013; Chimote & Srivastava, 2013), research has also identified that the concept of presenteeism exists in many organisations and in many countries around the world (Baker-McClearn, Greasley, Dale &

Griffith, 2010; Johns, 2010; Lu, Cooper & Hui, 2013). Organisational downsizing and job insecurity could encourage presenteeism, especially in organisations where working long hours and staying late at work signifies commitment and loyalty, whereas low morale and a perception of injustice by employees could lead to higher absenteeism (Johns, 2010). Presenteeism has been perceived to be a particular issue when an employee comes in to work even when he/she is unwell, when he/she feels that it is not possible to take time off work due to a lack of replacement personnel (Johns, 2008; 2010) and, more generally, when an employee stays at work for long hours to demonstrate commitment (Lu et al., 2013; Simpson, 1998). As such, presenteeism has been linked to lost productivity (Lu et al., 2013), increased rate of accidents (Musich, Hook, Baaner, Spooner & Edington, 2006), chronic health conditions (Jeon, Leem, Park, Heo, Lee, Moon, Jung & Kim, 2014) and work-life imbalance (Johns, 2010). Research suggests that each of these dimensions may be caused by workplace-related factors (e.g., company policies and culture) or internal factors (e.g., if an employee perceives that their absence will create a large burden for their colleagues, the organisation and for clients, and the extent to which this can affect career prospects negatively) (Baker-McClearn et al., 2010). This study will also discuss workplace-related and internal factors, in other words, the perceived need to remain in the workplace for long hours in order to show commitment to the organisation. Empirical studies have also provided evidence to suggest that workers in industries that offer personalised services, such as health workers, police officers and teachers,

are more prone to presenteeism (Deery, Walsh & Zatzick, 2014). Jeon and colleagues (2014) also found a positive correlation between working hours and presenteeism from wage workers in Korea in various industries. It is important to note that although presenteeism has been reported within Western countries as well as in other countries, its intensity may vary across contexts. For example, in a study conducted in Britain and Taiwan among full-time employees working in diverse industries, simultaneously investigating the impact of presenteeism on employee well-being, Lu and colleagues (2013) found that Chinese workers in Taiwan engaged more in presenteeism and reported higher levels of stress than British workers, due to a 'workaholic' culture prevalent among the Chinese.

It should be noted that there is little evidence in Africa to suggest that employees are pressurised to attend work when ill, and presenteeism as a concept has rarely been reported in African literature, although empirical studies have provided evidence of a prevalent culture of working long hours and staying late at work (Annor, 2014; Epie & Ituma, 2014; Mordi & Ojo, 2011), even if productivity is compromised (Epie & Ituma, 2014; Mordi et al., 2013).

With increased pressure on working mothers created by job insecurity and the need to fulfil work and home responsibilities effectively, research evidence suggests that employees are exploring a new meaning to life, thus embracing spirituality. The following section outlines the importance of spirituality in greater detail.

#### **2.4.7 The importance of religion and spirituality at work**

Incidents like the September 11, 2001 attacks, the global economic recession and persistent job insecurity have led many people to re-evaluate their work and search for an inner meaning to life (Ajala, 2013, Garcia-Zamor, 2003). As a result, many are embracing an increased belief in the existence of God (Ajala, 2013). The belief in the existence of God serves as succour or an emotional support to help people understand, to provide explanations, to accept negative events/perceived threats or to believe that there is a higher being that can help restore normality (Pierce, 2010). Recognising that employees have other needs apart from work, employers are increasingly accommodating the need for their employees' religious activities or affiliations (Jason & Sudha, 2014), as satisfied and engaged employees can also increase commitment and organisational performance (Garcia-Zamor, 2003). Furthermore, ethical virtues like honesty, forgiveness and tolerance are now being linked to religion, while workplace spirituality has been linked with creativity, engagement and self-fulfilment (Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002).

The popular belief by most religions that God is everywhere means that the workplace is a space where divinity can be experienced (Pierce, 2010). Spirituality has been interpreted as a concept deeper than religion, encompassing other ethical traits like honesty, kindness and love (Jason & Sudha, 2014). According to Pierce (2010:19),

*“Spirituality of work is a disciplined attempt to align ourselves and our environment with God and to incarnate God’s spirit into the world*

*through all the effort (paid and unpaid) we exert to make the world a better place, a little closer to the way God would have things.”*

This orientation has also affected the way that work is being viewed. For example, while some people view work as a career, others view it as their calling from God (Pierce, 2010). Different religions have teachings linked to work. For example, Islam teaches commitment, justice and generosity, whereas Buddhism teaches devotion and hard work (Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002:155).

Some research has provided evidence of religion playing an important role in problem-solving, especially in providing support or providing justifications or explanations during unfavourable or negative life events (Pargament, Ensing, Falgout, Olsen, Reilly, Van Haitsma & Warren, 1990; Pargament, Kennell, Hathaway, Grevengoed, Jon & Jones, 1988). For example, in a qualitative study with 15 adults aimed at examining the role of religion in problem solving, Pargament et al. (1988) found that respondents had three styles of problem-solving: self-directing, i.e., where God was a passive actor in the relationship (*"God put me here on this earth and gave me the skills and strengths to solve my problems myself"*) (p. 91), deferring, i.e., where the role of taking action is left to God (*"I let God decide and waited for a sign from Him about what I should do"*) (p. 92) and collaborative, i.e., where the individual and God collaborate in finding a solution to the problem (*"God is my partner. He works with me and strengthens me"*) (p. 92).

Hall et al. (2011) reported a similar finding in a study of how black women in Massachusetts, Tennessee and New York coped with workplace stress



and racial discrimination. Some of the women sometimes resorted to prayer and church attendance as a coping strategy. For example, one of their respondents said:

*“I’m just trying to pray on it. I swear it’s the only way that I’ve dealt with the stressors I face...”* (p.13).

According to Hall et al. (2011:14),

*“for Black women, church members perform functional, instrumental, and emotional support by providing guidance and advice, relaxing with or sharing recreational activities, and/or providing financial support, transportation, or assistance with child care responsibilities.”*

In the Nigerian environment, the situation is somewhat similar to that described above. Security challenges in some states in Nigeria (Fajana, 2005) and economic recession with its resultant job insecurity are also a source of stress for Nigerian workers (Mordi et al., 2013). Aryee (2005) also reported job insecurity to be a source of stress for workers in sub-Saharan Africa. Evidence shows that belief in God has served as a support mechanism. For example, Ajala (2013), in his study of industrial workers in three firms in Oyo State, South-Western Nigeria, reported on evidence of workplace spirituality enhancing employee wellbeing and aiding in the reduction of stress and burnout. Employees who experienced workplace spirituality were also reported to have found work more satisfying and meaningful (Ajala, 2013). Mordi et al. (2013) argued that for Nigerians, work-life balance is sometimes being interpreted as having time for work and religious activities. In examining the facilitators and barriers to WLB among

Nigerian mothers, workplace or organisational-level supports such as LB policies and practices ,will also be discussed.

#### **2.4.8 WLB policies and practices**

Workers are conscious beings who have interests which may demand their limited resources (e.g. time and energy) simultaneously. Workers are therefore more loyal, committed and engaged, and less willing to change jobs when they perceive that their jobs offer some flexibility to meet their other needs (e.g. family or a hobby) apart from work-related responsibilities (Hill, Grzywacz, Allen, Blanchard, Matz-Costa, Shulkin & Pitt-Catsoupes, 2008). The recognition that valued employees have other interests outside of work, such as family and leisure, has made many employers respond through the introduction of family-friendly programmes and other forms of workplace flexibility options (Aryee et al., 2013).

WLB Programmes or family-friendly programmes have been used interchangeably in the literature to describe *“programmes designed to alleviate individual conflict between work and family”* (Sutton & Noe, 2005:152). It should be noted that what constitutes WLB and WLB policies/initiatives vary from country to country (Kossek & Ollier-Malaterre, 2013).

The focus of WLB has also differed in many countries, with liberal economies relying more on employer-led initiatives while state support has been the focus in welfare states (Kossek et al., 2010). In the UK, WLB policies are focused upon work flexibility (flexitime, part-time work, job

sharing, compressed hours, term-time working and other issues around working time) (Fagan et al., 2012) while other researchers in Australia (Pocock, 2003) and the US (Kossek et al., 2010; Kossek & Ollier-Malaterre, 2013) have focused not only on work flexibility but also on employee assistance programmes (employee counselling, sick leave and elder care). Although the availability of FWAs has been reported widely in advanced countries, success in implementation varies in different countries. Pocock (2003) reported that part-time workers in Australia were concentrated in low wage jobs with poor security and working conditions. Other studies have reported that formal workplace policies are effectively implemented when there is buy-in and support from their supervisors (Aryee et al., 2013)

In non-western countries, the concept of WLB is still emerging in corporate settings and work flexibility options for workers are limited. For example, among call centre workers in India, limited flexibility arrangements were reported in multinational companies in addition to perks to increase workers' loyalty, and WLB initiatives reported were mainly maternity, paternity and sick leaves (Rajan-Rankin & Tomlinson, 2013). Additionally, WLB policies were tackled on a case-by-case basis at managerial discretion (Rajan-Rankin & Tomlinson, 2013). Also as cited by Kossek and Ollier-Malaterre (2013) from a study conducted by Lagos (2009), working close to their homes was considered one of the main work-life issues by Chilean women. Flexible working arrangements (FWAs) might be more appropriate in discussions of WLB in western countries because of their greater availability. However, WLB policies or family-friendly policies are considered

more appropriate and will be used when referring to the African context, due to the limited availability of FWAs.

Organisations in Western countries are embracing workplace flexibility options, as well as family-friendly policies, as the labour participation rate for women increases. The evolution of these policies in Nigerian organisations is relatively slow, thus maintaining the masculine organisational culture. For example, the persistent portrayal of full-time working and long working hours as ideal types of working (Burke & Major, 2014) implies that women working in such environments are likely to find it not only stressful but also unaccommodating (Epie & Ituma, 2014).

Work-life studies in Africa have been approached from an individualised perspective although occasional accounts of work-life support have emerged, due to informal support from supervisors and colleagues (Aryee, 2005; Ovadje and Ankomah, 2001). Evidence of explicit WLB initiatives in the oil and gas sector in Nigeria has not been documented, although implementing family-friendly programmes has been identified as one of most important challenges facing HR professionals in Nigeria (Okpara & Wynn, 2007). Most research on work and family has concentrated on policies available in the Nigerian banking sector (Ajayi et al., 2015; Mordi et al., 2013; Mordi & Ojo, 2011) and this has been justified, based on a culture of long working hours and the high prevalence of workplace stress within this sector (Oke & Dawson, 2008).

In most African countries, paternity leave is unpopular (Mapedzahama, 2014) because of the support enjoyed from relatives (Okonkwo, 2014) as well as the pervasive patriarchal belief that mothers should take responsibility for childcare (Mordi et al., 2013). However, countries like Mauritius, Tanzania and Uganda currently provide four to five days of paid paternity leave (Mokomane, 2011). While the Nigeria Labour Act (1990) provides for employer-funded maternity leave with half-salary six weeks before and six weeks after confinement (Epie & Ituma, 2014), most African countries have also made provision in their laws, ranging from twelve to fourteen weeks paid maternity leave. However, not all countries provide for 100% payment (Mapedzahama, 2014 2011). The Nigeria Labour Act also provides for a daily hour break for working mothers to nurse their child.

Generally, there has been no evidence of any legislation allowing workers to request FWAs from their employers in African countries (Mokomane, 2011) although some evidence has been provided at the organisational level with the introduction of work-life programmes (Mordi et al., 2013). For example, Mordi et al. (2013) found evidence of FWAs and some form of childcare support within the banking sector in Nigeria, although surprisingly none of the employees interviewed in these banks knew that such policies existed. Some of the managers interviewed felt that flexible working was a foreign concept that might not work effectively within the Nigerian environment (Mordi et al., 2013). This finding is supported by Azolukwam and Perkins (2009) who argued that the transfer of western HRM practices, without adaptation to the culture of the host country, alienates employees

from such practices, common among multinational companies which replicate parent company policies at subsidiary locations. Azolukwam and Perkins (2009) further argued for 'glocalisation' of HR policies by blending global practices with local customs to achieve maximum efficiency.

Having discussed some of the barriers and facilitators affecting the effective functioning of WLB within the Nigerian context, the next two sections discuss WLC and coping strategies used by workers in balancing work and family responsibilities in Nigeria.

## **2.5 Work-life conflict**

One of the outcomes of the proliferation of dual-earner families in many countries around the world is the increase in the number of hours parents spend outside the home. This suggests that working mothers are less available to do the non-work or family demands (Moen, Kelly & Hill, 2011). With a competitive labour market and an ongoing recovery from the global economic crisis, companies are increasingly striving to achieve greater efficiency, i.e., greater output (performance) with reduced input (employees) and are therefore demanding more from those employees still in work. As a result, the combined pressures from work and family are likely to conflict for working parents (Moen et al., 2011), especially mothers who continue to perform the bulk of domestic and childcare responsibilities (Akintayo, 2006; Lyonette & Crompton, 2015). As reported earlier, they are also held accountable for achieving high standards at work and at home.

The prevalence of the “ideal worker” model which signifies commitment (Lewis, 1997) and the increased possibility of career growth, combined with women’s continued responsibility for childcare and housework, makes it difficult for women to compete with men in the workplace (Lyonette & Crompton, 2015; MacDonald et al., 2005). This burdened schedule has been referred to by various researchers as the “second shift” (Hochschild & Machung, 2012) or “double day” (Beneria, 1981). Early investigations suggested that women continue to perform the bulk of housework and childcare responsibilities because they are not in the labour market and thus have more time (for more on this, see economic exchange theory in the division of domestic labour section of this chapter). However, further analysis also provides evidence that women continue to do the bulk of the housework, even when they are also in paid employment outside the home (ILO-UNDP, 2009).

Generally, work is designed with ‘traditional’ employees in mind and job specifications do not take into consideration the fact that employees might have other responsibilities, like the family (Stone, 2007). For instance, Pocock (2003:246) reported that Australia’s government policies do not support combining work and care and “*proper workers are made in a more, not less, care-unfriendly ideal worker image*”. Another study showed that women in professional jobs were leaving paid employment after having children because of job demands and an unsupportive work environment: as work demands were increasing, so were parenting demands (Cotter, Hermsen & Vanneman, 2011). Reviewing their 2010 article, “*Is Anyone*

*Doing the Housework*", Bianchi et al. (2012) explained further that examining the total number of hours each individual invested in household work might not be very useful in understanding why women continue to do the bulk of care work. More recent evidence from the US suggests that American society is moving towards "*egalitarian but traditional gender frame*" (Bianchi et al., 2012:283). According to Bianchi et al. (2012), childcare contributes more to the gendered division of labour than housework because children need attention all the time and a new realisation by women of the demands of motherhood is making more women take the option of stay-at-home mother over career development. This partly explains why many women still leave their jobs after having children, despite efforts by employers to put in place family-friendly programmes. According to Stone (2007:4):

*"If work had been so great, their employers so accommodating of their families, why were mothers leaving? The reasons they gave all revolved around family..."*

Early literature on WLC concentrated on working families, with results showing that workers with families experience a higher WLC, although there was no significant difference between the conflicts experienced by employed wives and husbands (Pleck et al., 1980). In a later study, mothers reported more conflict (especially those with young children) than fathers, while the level of conflict experienced by unmarried men and women was not significantly different (Crouter, 1984). According to Crouter (1984:436), "*the family-to-work influences are closely linked to the stages of*



*the family life cycle and the changing nature of the maternal role*". This argument also resonated with researchers who have found links between WLC and having younger children and larger families (Beutell & Greenhaus, 1982; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

Some recent evidence has, however, suggested that men now experience more work-life conflict than women, a trend that has been described as the '*new male mystique*' (Aumann, Galinsky & Matos, 2011:1). Using the US National Study of the Changing Workforce, Aumann et al. (2011) discovered that work-life conflict (WLC) of men and women in dual earner couples has increased from 35% and 41% respectively in 1977 to 60% and 47% respectively in 2008. This implies that WLC in men has increased by 71% while WLC in women increased by 15% within a period of 30 years. Although it is important to discuss ongoing debates about work-life conflict and the changes that have been noticed over the years in western countries, this study will be restricted to WLC experienced by women, and most specifically by mothers in Nigeria.

### **2.5.1 Work-life conflict and working mothers in Nigeria**

In Africa, historically, a fruitful marriage is one blessed with children and couples are usually encouraged to have large families (Aina, 1998; Babatunde & Setiloane, 2014; Nyarko, 2014). Having a large family and not spending enough time with its members is likely to cause conflict and there have been incidents of blaming mothers for children's unacceptable

behaviours (Worsfold, 2011). A popular saying in Yorubaland is “*the good child is the father’s while the bad one is the mother’s*” (Worsfold, 2011).

Also relevant to the study of WLB in Africa is the care of old people. Due to the absence of any social support/social security system, it is widely believed in Nigeria that children will provide support for their parents in their old age (Idogo, 2015). While there are care homes in Nigeria, leaving one’s parents in these homes is widely frowned upon and viewed as a non-African practice (Mokomane, 2011). According to Mokomane (2011:2), “*the African system of intergenerational parenting and caregiving expects adult children (particularly daughters) to take responsibility for the care and maintenance of their elderly parents*”. When the child is a male, this responsibility falls primarily on his wife. However, an increase in rural-urban migration for better work has limited the availability of support from relatives. Women’s responsibilities for housework, caring for young children and for older people where possible, combined with a relatively inflexible working schedule, are very likely to increase WLC. In addition to intensified work and caring pressures, working mothers in Nigeria are also pressurised by structural deficiencies such as unstable electricity supplies, bad roads and long traffic jams (Epie & Ituma, 2014).

Akintayo (2006) studied workers in five organisations in South-Western Nigeria and reported a difference in work commitment and career aspirations shown by men and women: women’s commitment and level of ambition were lower than the male respondents, while women’s commitment to the family role was higher. Unmarried respondents were

more committed to the achievement of organisational goals than respondents who were married (Akintayo, 2010). The author attributed the low organisational commitment by married respondents to their family commitments and suggested that work-family role conflict impacts negatively on organisational commitment among industrial workers in Nigeria.

Working mothers in advanced economies such as the UK and some Scandinavian countries enjoy some form of support from the government such as free or subsidised childcare and flexible working legislation and other family supportive policies (Fagan et al., 2012), although this varies significantly by country. Government support to working families is not common in most parts of Africa (Aryee, 2005).

Empirical studies have also provided evidence of a pervasive culture of working long hours in many companies in Africa and, as a result, researchers have reported that the existence of work-life conflict (WLC) is prevalent (Annor, 2014; Aryee, 2005; Epie & Ituma, 2014). Ugwu (2009:2236) also reported in his study of dual-earner couples who were university employees and hospital workers in Nsukka, South-Eastern Nigeria that poor conditions of service, work overload and problems coordinating work and home demands were major sources of work-related stress reported by respondents. Evidence of family-work conflict (FWC) has also been reported in the Nigerian work environment, although western studies have typically found less evidence of such conflict. For example, Chovwey (2007:74) reported that female participants complained about having to

decline relocation offers due to family needs which has the consequence of stunting women's career growth. Mordi et al. (2013) reported how managers in some Nigerian banks reported working for twelve to fourteen hours daily and having to come to work on weekends. Long working hours, overtime work, and weekend work were also the main work stressors reported by Annor (2014) in his study conducted in Ghana. In respect of family-work conflict, the findings are varied: while some have reported that family responsibilities affected work life (Chovwen, 2007) other findings have suggested that family members could actually be a resource necessary to reduce WLC (Aryee, 2005, Okonkwo, 2014).

## **2.6 Strategies devised to cope with work and family responsibilities.**

The coping strategies of working mothers have been discussed in western literature from the institutional perspective: the role of the state in supporting working families (e.g., Crompton, Brockmann & Lyonette, 2005; Crompton & Lyonette, 2006; Lyonette et al., 2007). However, coping strategies have been discussed in emerging economies mostly from an individualised perspective, with women fitting their routines into those of the organisation, as described by Aluko (2009:2116): "*women found ways to change their lives, instead of attempting to challenge the organisational policies*". Adjustments could include delaying marriage or child bearing (Aluko, 2009), a huge sacrifice in an environment where marriage and child bearing are seen as a priority for women (Aryee, 2005).

Getting support from family members, especially the husband, is important for a woman, irrespective of her marital status in Africa and parts of Asia (Bryceson, 2010; Mordi, Simpson, Singh & Okafor, 2010; Ramu, 1987). In her study of workers in Bangalore's three major public sector organisations in South India, Ramu (1987:906) found that over 45% of wives in single-earner families would have preferred to work but were constrained because of pre-school children and disapproval by their husbands. Mordi et al. (2010) also found in a study about the challenges faced by female entrepreneurs in Nigeria that some women felt that the lack of support from their husbands was a source of constraint in their work.

Peculiar within African societies is the early take-up of responsibilities by older children and this serves as a form of support for working and non-working mothers alike (Okonkwo, 2014). This support can be in the form of taking care of their younger siblings or taking care of their grandparents (Idogo, 2015).

The outsourcing of domestic and childcare responsibilities to live-in paid domestic help (discussed under sub-contracting of domestic responsibilities in this chapter) has also been discussed in the African literature as a coping strategy for working mothers (Mapedzahama, 2014, Muasya, 2014). Unlike in the west, where public daycare is the norm for working parents, parents in Africa prefer to use other means to manage childcare responsibilities, even in cases where public daycare exists. For example, in Zimbabwe, where a form of childhood education and care service was provided by

government, parents still opted for live-in helps and live-in relatives (Mapedzahama, 2014).

## **2.7 Summary**

This chapter has identified some of the research issues that will be the focus of subsequent chapters. Work-life balance is a massive topic that has benefitted from various disciplines that have dissected the topic from both macro and micro levels. While WLB has been approached from work structure and work time perspectives in western literature, WLB has been approached from a conflict perspective in much of the literature on work and family in Africa, including Nigeria. As such, this chapter has presented literature from the conflict perspective.

As African researchers have envisaged, the literature suggests that the experience of WLB in western and African contexts might differ (Aryee, 2005). Although relevant literature was explored from developed and developing economies, only issues of relevance to the Nigerian context have been included extensively in this chapter.

Nigeria is a society where patriarchal values are prevalent and cherished by society at all institutional levels. As such, this has affected interactions at the organisational and family settings (Ajayi et al., 2015). Increasing discourses about the role of women in various settings, coupled with the recent entry of women into formal employment in Nigeria, has brought to the fore the need to re-negotiate power relations at each level through the demand for flexible work arrangements for employees, especially working

families, a drive toward gender egalitarianism at the household level and a recognition of the potential and ability of women to compete on an equal footing with their male colleagues. Gender relations within the Nigeria context and how it is affected by the patriarchal societal orientation has been discussed in this chapter. Other barriers or facilitators of WLB for working mothers in Nigeria like the division of domestic labour, the subcontracting of domestic chores to the market, gender stereotyping and presenteeism were also extensively discussed. More importantly, the sharing of domestic chores between partners is still under-researched in Nigeria because of its prevailing patriarchal values. As a result, working women are likely to feel more stressed in integrating work and family roles. Discussing the division of labour will therefore be useful in the study to further our understanding of the activities of working mothers within the home, their responsibilities, their orientations, their attitudes and the reasons why they continue to bear the bulk of the burden of housework and childcare responsibilities.

Economic recession and its resultant job insecurity, coupled with security challenges experienced by workers in Nigeria, is changing employees' perceptions about work. As such, employees are searching for emotional support and are embracing workplace spirituality as a coping strategy to withstand stress emanating from the work and home spheres.

Increases in dual-earner families have resulted in working mothers devoting less time to family demands, especially with increased work demands (Moen et al., 2011). Being the primary caregiver in most societies has also exerted additional pressure on the working mother and conflicting

expectations from the two domains have been linked to work-life conflict in many studies (Aryee, 1992; Fox, Fonseca & Bao, 2011; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Ryan et al., 2012). Like most societies, working mothers in Nigeria have also been reported to be experiencing work-life conflict as a result of work demands, extensive family responsibilities due to a lack of government support/programmes to support working families and old people, as well as the inefficiency inherent in the provision of infrastructural facilities by the government. In attempting to cope with WLC, working mothers in Nigeria have resorted largely to individual measures which include getting support from their older children, distant relatives and grandparents. Unlike research on the division of domestic labour in the UK and some European countries which concentrates on negotiating for a more equal distribution of household chores between spouses, most of the literature in Africa has focused on other sources of help. This is, however, not surprising because Nigeria is a patriarchal society where men doing household chores is not pervasive. It is important to note that the gendered division of labour exists in all societies, although the extent of movement towards egalitarianism varies across countries (Crompton & Lyonette, 2006).

Other issues discussed which are considered relevant in understanding how WLC is experienced by working mothers in Nigeria include WLB policies and practices and strategies documented by earlier studies to be useful for workers in coping with the demands of work and family. Bearing in mind that previous studies in Africa have concentrated on the banking sector,



educational and health sectors, it will be useful to fill part of the gap in the research by looking at working mothers in the oil and gas sector in Nigeria. Having discussed relevant literature in this chapter, the next chapter discusses theories that will provide a structure for the explanation and understanding of how WLB is experienced among working mothers in Nigeria.

## **CHAPTER 3      THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **3.1      Introduction**

Human capital is the greatest asset of any company and is the only factor of production that has the ability to think and utilise other factors to achieve optimum benefit for the organisation. With this in mind, organisations, governments and work-family researchers continue their interest in achieving effective performance at the individual, organisational and national levels.

The work-family relationship has been examined from many different dimensions by many different scholars, thereby benefiting from the varied approaches of a number of disciplines. This research will therefore explore the concept of WLB by relying on the contributions of sociologists, psychologists, HR practitioners, economists and health and safety professionals, to name a few.

With increasing industrialisation and globalisation as a significant trend across the world, the world of work has been undergoing phenomenal changes and various emerging theories have helped to shape the body of knowledge around work-life balance. Although there is an extensive body of research on work and family in advanced countries, a literature search, undertaken as part of the research described here, suggests that the field is still emerging in most developing economies where the applicability and generalisability of western theories are still being tested (Aryee, 2005). Because of the absence of context-specific theories developed in African or

other developing countries, this study will therefore rely on theories which have been developed from research in advanced economies, similar to earlier studies on work and family in Africa (Annor 2014).

In understanding how working mothers in Nigeria experience WLC, this chapter will be structured with the life course of working mothers with young children in mind. As such, this will involve discussing the arguments of early stress theories and thereafter moving on to more specific theories that deal with the work-life interface. The focal theory of this study will be WFC theory with a specific focus on the sources of conflict theory developed by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985). Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) theory was chosen as the most appropriate because most studies on work and family in Africa have approached the work-family relationship from a role conflict or stress perspective (Annor, 2014) even when the focus was on WLB (Mordi et al., 2013; Akanji, 2012; Ajayi et al., 2015). More importantly, these studies include time-based, strain-based and behaviour-based pressures which are all relevant to working mothers in the Nigerian context.

### **3.2 Work-Life Interface theories**

This section discusses role theory, work-family border theory, work-life enrichment and work-life conflict theories. As stated in the introductory section of this chapter, Greenhaus and Beutell's theory is the focal theory of this study. However, in order to have a thorough understanding of WLB and WLC in the Nigerian context, it will be useful to comprehend the evolution of theories that Greenhaus and Beutell relied on in developing

their sources of conflict model. These theories will be discussed in the following sections.

### **3.2.1 Role Theory**

One of the earliest and most prominent theories that helped shape the understanding of the relationship between work and family roles is role theory. Role theory argues that stress/conflict occurs when an individual experiences conflict due to the handling of multiple roles, and whereby performing one role makes it difficult to be effective in the other role (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999).

Goode (1960:484) discusses the role obligation imposed on individuals due to the existence of social structures and the fulfilment of these roles being pertinent for the functioning of society. Similar to the structural functionalist arguments, the responsibility for providing for the family by means of paid employment was seen as that of the man, while responsibilities within the house were generally viewed as feminine. Early accounts of role strain were explored when Goode (1960) argued that the structure of society is made up of roles and that, naturally, people want to fulfil their role obligations. However, some individuals might not be able to fulfil all their role obligations due to insufficient resources (e.g., time and energy), to conflicting expectations from multiple roles or having to deal with a diverse range of role obligations. Individuals therefore have to select how they allocate their energy to their different role obligations. Goode (1960:485) linked the division of labour to the theorem of institutional integration where “*people*

*generally want to do what they are supposed to do, and this is what the society needs to have done in order to continue.”* He added that there are some individuals who do not necessarily conform to the prescribed norms due to their preferences or situations – for example, the case of a working mother who takes on the role of a worker, as well as being a mother and a wife could fit this description. Taking up different roles can therefore involve different demands and competition for resources (financial, skills, time, and energy) which at times can be conflicting. Kahn et al. (1964:19) described role conflict as:

*“the simultaneous occurrence of two (or more) sets of pressures such that compliance with one would make difficult compliance with the other. In the extreme case, compliance with one set of pressures excludes completely the possibility of compliance with another set; the two sets of pressures are mutually contradictory.”*

Role theory has been adopted as a framework to understand the experiences of women in a patriarchal country like Nigeria because it explains why women are judged with socially constructed, gender-appropriate behaviours, especially within the African context where childcare and housework are perceived as greater priorities for a woman than pursuing a career. Role theory also aids in understanding how women juggle between work and home responsibilities which compete for their limited resources (time and energy). Societal expectations could lead to people who do not conform to these societal ideals being falsely labelled as ‘deviants’ (Jackson, 1998) and *“places the responsibility for overcoming maladaptation on the individual”* (p.51).

Despite the contributions of role theory as one of the earliest and major theories within the field of work and family studies, it has subsequently been criticised, largely due to its conservative argument of a normal/neutral standard of behaviour which is not only ungeneralisable but has also segmented human roles into clear-cut activities that are independent of one another (Jackson, 1998). On the other hand, work-family border theory extends the arguments of role theory by viewing work and family spheres as interconnected.

### **3.2.2 Work-family border theory**

To understand WLB in Nigeria through the eyes of the working mothers who are 'border crossers', navigating between work and family spheres, work/family border theory will be discussed. An increase in female labour force participation, dual earner families and care for the elderly, have made the interconnectedness of the two spheres more apparent (Aluko, 2009). More importantly, since work and family-related activities sometimes occur simultaneously (for example, having to take a child for a hospital appointment during work hours or having to use family time to finish some official work), researchers, employers and government are paying more attention to the work-life interface in Nigeria.

A major theory that discusses this interconnectedness is work-family border theory (Clark, 2000). Unlike role theorists, work-family border theorists see work and family as different spheres that are interrelated, with permeable borders. According to Clark (2000:748):

*“Work/family border theory is an attempt to explain the complex interaction between border crossers and their work and family lives, to predict when conflict will occur, and give a framework for attaining balance. ... People are border-crossers who made daily transitions between two worlds - the world of work and the world of family”*

Research evidence demonstrates both positive and negative outcomes from the work-family relationship. Work-life conflict theories expand on the negative outcomes of this relationship.

### **3.2.3 Work-Life Conflict (WLC)**

The initial focus of role theory centred on role strain and role conflict (Duxbury, Lyons & Higgins, 2008). Recent research on work-family relationships have extended the discussion by drawing from role theory in explaining the challenges experienced by individuals in combining work and other areas of interest, using work-family and work-life perspectives. Work-family conflict has been used to describe conflicts that ensue when work and family roles are incompatible (Voydanoff, 2008), while work-life conflict involves conflict that results from the incompatibility of work and other life roles (other activities of interest to an individual). In recognising that workers might have other interests interfering with work aside from family, work-life conflict will be adopted in this thesis.

Empirical evidence suggests that work demands could interfere with family (work-family interference) and that family demands could also interfere with work (family-work interference) (Bacharach, Bamberger & Conley, 1991). Some of the earliest work on WLC was that published by Pleck, Staines and

Lang (1980) which drew on the earlier work of multiple role involvement by Goode (1960). Pleck and colleagues' findings provided evidence of a possible interference between work and family. Some of the possible causes of conflict discussed were working long hours, work and family responsibilities' schedule incompatibility and fatigue at work. They also discovered that the conflict reported by men was mostly associated with working long hours, while that of women was related to schedule incompatibility. There were, however, no significant differences in the conflict experienced by men and women.

In other early research, Crouter (1984) argued that research on work-life integration focuses on conflicts emanating from work-to-family with a neglect of conflicts emanating from family-to-work. Crouter (1984) further argued that family circumstances affected the patterns of spillover: mothers reported more family-to-work spillover than fathers, while unmarried men and women reported no family-to-work spillover. In addition to negative spillover, evidence of positive spillover was similarly reported by Crouter (1984:438) where she discovered that workers constructed narratives of applying knowledge, skills, attitudes and perspectives learnt at home to their jobs which she referred to as 'educational spillover'.

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) similarly identified work-related and family-related time-based and strain-based conflict. Building on Greenhaus and Beutell's model of the sources of conflict, Frone et al. (1992) agreed that WFC is bidirectional, i.e. work interferes with family and family interferes with work. Frone et al. (1992) further argued that if work interferes with



family, unfulfilled family responsibilities will in turn affect performance at work and vice-versa. Some of the outcomes of WFC and FWC identified in research were absenteeism, reduced job satisfaction, and increased mental and physical stress (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Other research found that various factors may be responsible for the level of WFC experienced by an individual or a family (Agarwala, Arizkuren-Eleta, Del Castillo, Muñiz-Ferrer & Gartzia, 2014; Fox et al., 2011; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Kopelman, Greenhaus & Connolly, 1983). The level of conflict experienced by a couple who are both career-oriented, for example, will usually be higher than that experienced by another couple where one of the partners has subordinated any career aspirations to home responsibilities (Boyar, Maertz Jr, Pearson & Keough, 2003; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). The number and ages of children within a family have also been found to affect the level of WLC experienced by working mothers; families with few children experience less WLC while larger families experience more WFC. Similarly, families with older children usually experience less work-life conflict than families with younger children (Beutell & Greenhaus, 1982; Fox et al., 2011).

Most of the research conducted in Africa has relied on conflict theories as a theoretical framework that furthers our understanding about the stress faced by working women on a daily basis as they navigate between work and family spheres. As such, similar to western economies, evidence of the prevalence of a culture of working long hours has been linked to increased work-life conflict (Epie & Ituma, 2014; Mordi et al., 2013). On the other hand, empirical evidence from Africa has also provided more evidence to show

that within the African context, having large families or younger children might not necessarily increase work-life conflict, as it does in the west, because of the existence of social support from relatives in taking care of children (Annor, 2014, Okonkwo, 2014). The next section discusses the positive aspects of the work-family interface.

#### **3.2.4 Work-Life Enrichment (WLE)**

Marks (1977) pointed out that although evidence of a scarcity of resources has been found, evidence of an abundance of energy has also been discovered in a number of individuals, which questions the universality of the scarcity hypothesis and the role conflict stance. Marks (1977:935) therefore argued for an expansion theory where energy and time are flexible.

One of the early accounts of the positive interrelationship between work and family was the concept of role accumulation, where performing multiple roles is believed to be more gratifying than stressful (Sieber, 1974). According to Sieber (1974:577), *“despite the likelihood of role conflict for the working mother, women are seeking a wider role repertoire to increase their resources, privileges and sense of personal worth”*. He further argued that roles have in-built privileges which are enjoyed by role recipients as well as informal perquisites like *“recommendations or introductions to third parties who might advance one's career or other interests, i.e., connections and invitations to social gatherings”*- (p. 574).

In 1977, Marks revisited the works of theorists like Goode (1960) who focused on the scarcity approach to work and family. The scarcity theory is based on the premise that multiple roles lead to role strain which leads to energy drain. Although agreeing with a modified scarcity model in societies or cultural contexts where social institutions are segregated, where modern families have to live far away from their workplaces, Marks argued that individuals can decide which roles to invest their energy on, and as a result, there is always energy for roles that individuals value and are committed to. Like Sieber (1974), he explained further that roles provide privileges, buffers and resources, and role accumulation may enrich personality and enhance one's self-conception.

Later researchers have also been concerned with the positive side of the interface between work and other aspects of life which has been described using terms like work-life enrichment and work-life enhancement (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Poelmans, Greenhaus, & Stepanova, 2013). Greenhaus and Powell (2006:73) defined work-life enrichment by viewing work and family as allies where “*a diverse portfolio of social roles buffers an individual from distress stemming from one particular role*”.

In other words, the demands from one's various roles can be complementary (for example, work can enhance performance in the other domain of family) (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). A good example could be time management and planning skills acquired at work which can be useful at home to prioritise household tasks. Work-life enrichment has been divided into work-to family enrichment (positive effects

of work on family) and family-to-work enrichment (positive effects of family on work) (Baral & Bhargava, 2010:275). Handling multiple roles (*role accumulation*) has been found to contribute positively to well-being, life satisfaction and self-esteem (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006).

Working mothers acquire resources (skills, knowledge about cultural diversity and material resources) at work on a daily basis which could enhance their performance at home and, overall, lead to greater life satisfaction (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Resources acquired at home could also be beneficial at work. Work-life enrichment will therefore be useful in understanding any positive outcomes experienced by working mothers in the handling of work and home responsibilities.

As explained in the introduction section of this chapter, Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) sources of conflict model will be the focal theory of this study and will be discussed in the next section.

### **3.2.5 Summary of the work-life interface theories**

The field of work and family has been guided greatly by the work-life interface theories. For example, the role theory, although of a general application, provided a framework to understand that occupying multiple roles with different expectations could be stressful and thus create a conflict. Role theory therefore created a body of evidence which researchers in the field of work and family could build on. Work-family border, work-life conflict and work-life enrichment theories relied on the arguments of the role theory. However, they extended the discussion from a more general nature to

understanding a specific field, work and family, thereby enhancing our understanding of the negative and positive consequences of handling responsibilities emanating from the work and family spheres. The work-life interface theories cannot be abandoned because of their usefulness in understanding conflict. However, Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) model, the focal theory of this study, unified the arguments and models of earlier theorists into a model which has been applied and tested in various organisations, cultures and contexts (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011; Epie & Ituma, 2014; Okonkwo, 2014).

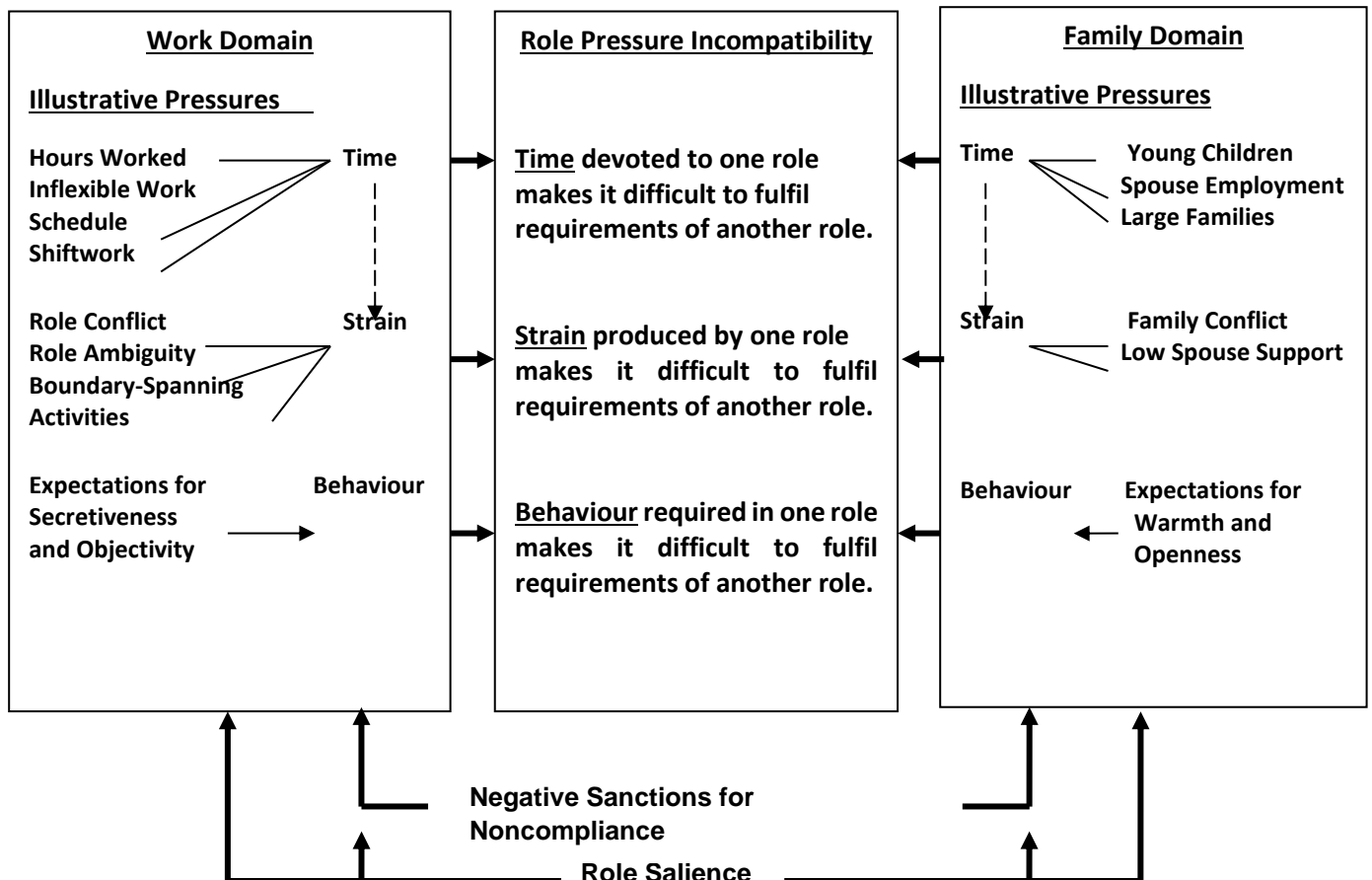
### **3.3 Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) sources of conflict model**

One of the most cited works on WFC is the '*sources of conflict between work and family roles*' article written by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985). Building on Kahn et al.'s (1964) definition of role conflict, Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) streamlined the discourse on conflict to that encountered between the work and home domains. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985:77) defined WFC as "*a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect*" - (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985:77). They added that "*any role characteristic that affects a person's time involvement, strain, or behaviour within a role can produce conflict between that role and another role.*"

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) unified previous research on work-family conflict in Western economies and came up with three sources of conflict: *time-based* conflict, *strain-based* conflict and *behaviour-based* conflict

which they developed into a model of the sources of work-family conflict. A diagram and detailed explanation of the sources of conflict model is shown below:

**Figure 3-1: Work-family role pressure incompatibility**



**Source: (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985:78)**

#### **a) Time-Based Conflict**

Bearing in mind that the time available to everyone on a daily basis is fixed, time becomes a resource that is competed for, due to multiple demands. This notion is in line with the 'scarcity' approach which has long been the

subject of debate in sociological settings. Building on Freud's (1961) work on the competition between civilisation-builders and lovers who are sufficient unto themselves for the limited energy of people, Marks (1977:935) argues that energy and time expand or contract, depending on the commitments that determine their availability (Ryan, Huth, Massman, Westring, Bannan & D'Mello, 2012). Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) further divided the sources of time-based conflict into work-related and family-related. In Nigeria, Mordi et al. (2013) and Epie (2005; 2010) have revealed the presence of work-related conflict within the African environment, while Okonkwo (2014) reported that having young children and large families is not a predictor of WLC experienced by working families in Nigeria. Studies on work and family in Africa have concentrated on families with young children (Annor, 2014), as in research from developed economies (e.g., Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Elman & Gilbert, 1984; Frome, Alfeld, Eccles & Barber, 2006). The prevalence of long working hours in Africa, compounded by the lack of flexible working available in most organisations, has made time-based conflict a framework that is particularly suited to understanding the working environment in Nigeria (Epie & Ituma, 2014; Mordi et al., 2013; Mordi & Ojo, 2011).

Apart from the physical and emotional demands of the job, Annor (2014) reported from his interviews with parents working full-time in a public University in Ghana that pay was a source of stress for respondents in his study. Aryee (2005) also reported that pay is a source of stress in Sub-Saharan Africa more generally. According to Annor (2014), workers were

forced to look for alternative income-generating activities to increase income and this reduced the time available for family-related activities.

#### **b) Strain-based Conflict**

Work will be viewed as physically or emotionally demanding when exhaustion and irritability generated at work interfere with family life (Annor, 2014; Bartolome & Evans, 1980; Pleck et al., 1980:30). Building on the work of Pleck et al. (1980), strain-based conflict was described by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985:80) as *“strain in one role affecting one's performance in another role. The roles are incompatible in the sense that the strain created by one makes it difficult to comply with the demands of another”*. Also building on Bartolome and Evans' (1980) study on factors affecting the efficient management of private and professional lives of two thousand executives, Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) divided strain-based conflict into work-related and family-related. An argument used to explain work-related strain-based conflict by Bartolome and Evans (1980) was that some executives find it hard to manage negative emotions from work due to challenges in a new job, taking the wrong job or the inability to manage job disappointments. Therefore stress, anxiety, fatigue or depression experienced at work could be transferred to the home which is usually exhibited in the form of aggression or withdrawal towards other members of the family (Ryan et al., 2012:139).

Within the Nigerian environment, Stephen (2014) reported an experience of stress and emotional strain by female workers in Nigerian banks who were



given targets to meet with a consequence of reprimand or a probable loss of job if there was consistent default in meeting such targets. This implies that emotional stress/tension created from work could lead to work-related conflict as this negative feeling is likely to be transferred to the home (Stephen, 2014).

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) described family-related strain-based conflict as conflict created when strain experienced at home affects one's performance at work. This type of strain could occur when there is lack of support from the family (e.g., one partner resisting the other partner going on official travel) or when partners have varied orientations about work and family (for example, if the husband holds traditional beliefs about the division of household chores while his partner is in favour of an egalitarian relationship) (Barnett, 1994, Crouter, 1984, Okonkwo, 2014). In patriarchal societies like Nigeria, where women's successes at home are celebrated more than career success, women are usually blamed for any challenges at home. Having a husband who supports his wife's career does not necessarily mean an acceptance of a more equal division of household chores (Aluko, 2009). Women with family responsibilities therefore tend to experience more family-related strain-based conflict because they are the primary caregiver: they care for their husbands, children and other relatives and this strain can sometimes be transferred to team members or colleagues who have to take over their responsibilities at work. Although there have been some positive findings in existing western research about the work-family relationship (Brough, Hassan & O'Driscoll, 2014; Carlson,

Kacmar, Wayne & Grzywacz, 2006; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006), “conflict” has been a recurring theme in the majority of African studies, along with reports upon the negative health impacts of conflict, such as stress and fatigue (Agarwal, 2014; Agyemang, Nyanyofio & Gyamfi, 2014; Akanji, 2013; Annor, 2014; Epie & Ituma, 2014; Mapedzahama, 2014). The wife within the African context is not only responsible to her husband, she is also responsible for taking care of the elderly relatives within the family. However, the communal culture makes this responsibility reciprocal; the extended family helps in taking care of the younger ones while the grown-up children take care of the old. Just like family-related time-based conflict, there have been few reports of family-related strain-based sources of conflict in Nigeria. The lack of this type of reported conflict might be attributed to the work-conscious orientation of Nigerians, coupled with the availability of strong social support enjoyed in Africa from relatives (Annor, 2014, Epie, 2010, Okonkwo, 2014).

### **c) Behaviour-Based Conflict**

Although any reference to ‘typical’ male and female characteristics is a hotly-debated topic, social discourse still commonly refers to various elements of gender ‘essentialism’ (for an overview, see Crompton & Lyonette, 2005). Emotional, caring and subtle qualities have previously been attributed to women, while assertiveness and leadership have been typically ascribed to men (Kray, Thompson & Galinsky, 2001). This orientation also resonates with the “*expressive*” and “*instrumental*” roles

attributed to females and males respectively by Talcott Parsons in his structural functionalism theory (Parsons & Bales, 1956). Due to the persistent differences in what is expected of men and women, those women taking up leadership roles may experience a form of conflict when navigating between work and family roles and may need to strive harder to signify commitment to the organisation's goals (Mordi et al., 2011). This form of conflict has been termed behaviour-based conflict by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) and has previously been reported in African studies involving women in management roles (Omar & Ogenyi, 2004). In addition, in a study of 247 industrial workers in Nigeria, selected from two public and two private organisations, Akintayo (2010) found that the traditional stereotype of women being home-keepers was a source of conflict when such women were found in paid employment.

### **3.4 Justification of the study's theoretical framework**

Generally, debate about WLB started with the mind-set that employees' working time and job demands take too much of their resources and as such impact upon workers' lives negatively (Eikhof et al., 2007). Although increased research in western economies has taken the debate further by exploring other theories affecting workers' working time, work structure and work demands, research in many emerging economies is still in its infancy and as such, researchers have approached WLB mainly from the conflict perspective (Mordi et al., 2013; Oludayo, Gberevbie, Popoola & Omonijo,

2015). As such, in understanding how working mothers experience WLB in Nigeria, conflict theories seem most appropriate.

Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) sources of conflict theory has been chosen as the focal theory not only because it relates to the work-family interface but also because it encompasses the arguments of other conflict theories. Importantly, it has previously been relied upon as a framework that explains how WLB and WLC have been experienced in Africa (Annor, 2014, Okonkwo, 2014).

### **3.5 Summary**

The aim of this chapter is to present theories that have been developed in the field of work and family to explain the work-family relationship in a Nigerian context. Bearing in mind that this study investigates the various aspects of the lives of working mothers: family life, work life, as well as their relationships with supervisors and colleagues, theories from different disciplines were explored in a bid to understand the plight of working mothers in Nigeria.

Role theory argues that the structure of society is made up of roles and people naturally want to fulfil their societal role to ensure the proper functioning of society. Proponents of role theory further argue that individuals might experience conflict and strain in fulfilling their multiple roles due to conflicting expectations. Work-family border theories provide a

theoretical underpinning by which the work-family relationship can be viewed as separate but interconnected spheres.

Building on role theory, work-life conflict models take conflict away from its broader meaning, focusing specifically on conflicts that occur in the work-family relationship. While the WLC models argue that combining work and family roles can be conflicting, work-life enrichment (WLE) theorists claim that the relationship between work and family has a positive side which can be beneficial. The theory of WLE is included in this study of Nigerian women, as the bulk of existing studies have concentrated on the conflict aspect, without acknowledging that the interconnectedness of the two spheres may lead to positive outcomes, with skills acquired from one sphere being beneficial in attaining effectiveness in the other.

In line with the arguments of other researchers on work and family in Africa, poverty and inadequate infrastructural facilities create a strain on the average worker in Nigeria, not typically seen in western countries. All the theories classified as work-life integration theories may therefore be relevant in understanding how WLC is experienced amongst working mothers in Nigeria. Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) sources of conflict model, however, has been chosen as the focal theory because it encompasses findings and arguments of the other conflict theories discussed.

The applicability of these theories, developed from years of research in Western contexts, will be tested in the findings chapters in order to ascertain

whether they can be transferred or modified in understanding work and family in Nigeria. The next chapter discusses in detail the research methodology, which will include a detailed discussion on the philosophical stance, research methods and data collection process.

## **CHAPTER 4      RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1      Introduction**

Previous chapters have introduced and reviewed research on WLB and WLC from both developed and developing economies; this chapter describes in detail the methodology that will aid in answering the research question of this thesis. More broadly, this study intends to provide answers to the question: how do working mothers experience WLC in Nigeria?

This chapter will provide a description of and justification for the choice of methods. It is divided into three sections: the epistemological framework, the research design of the pilot and main studies, findings from pilot testing and background information for the main study.

### **4.2      Philosophical stance**

The role of the social scientist is not to develop universal laws but to understand events, people and society and to explain these through the eyes of the actors involved. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985:110), *“generalisations are assertions of enduring value that are context-free”*. However, human beings are social animals who have the ability to reason, are self-conscious and have varied perceptions about themselves and their environment (Benton & Craib, 2001). According to Bryman (2016), the purpose of studying the social environment is to understand human behaviour which differs from the natural sciences where the focus is on providing explanations for human behaviour (p.26) and an epistemology

that reflects and capitalises on that difference is required (p.27). Benton and Craib (2001:79) described the interpretivist methodology using the German word used by Weber, “*verstehen*” translated as empathy:

*“an understanding of what is going on in the actor’s head and taking into consideration logical and symbolic systems like the culture. It is an emic knowledge or inside understanding of the perspectives and meanings of those settings being studied.” (p.235)*

The interpretivist epistemological framework aims to achieve a detailed understanding of context-specific incidences. Therefore, reality is viewed within this philosophical stance as being socially constructed by the actors and “*it can be linked to the ontological position of constructivism which believes that there is no social reality apart from the meaning of the social phenomenon for the participants*” (Matthews & Liz, 2010:25).

Furthermore, Magnusson and Marecek (2015) described qualitative research as “interpretative research” and argued that qualitative/interpretive researchers aim to understand the interpretations that people ascribe to events, situations and relationships in different contexts. According to Magnusson and Marecek (2015:4) “*context is implicated in and shapes people’s ways of understanding themselves and others*”. In understanding a concept like WLB, which has been interpreted differently across cultures, there is a need to use a research instrument that will accommodate some flexibility in order to achieve a detailed understanding of context-specific incidences.



As the study described here was conducted in a non-western context, it is possible that some of the findings may differ from documented evidence in western economies, making the interpretivist research philosophy the most appropriate (Bryman, 2016). This is because the researcher wants to see work-life balance through the eyes of the working mothers living in Nigeria as social actors, and the negotiation between their role as mothers to that of being employees (Saunders & Lewis, 2012:107).

### **4.3 Research design**

This research intends to fill part of the gap in the research by looking for patterns in behaviour, leading to what Saunders & Lewis (2012:109) describe as a process whereby researchers:

‘begin with specific observations and measures, begin to observe patterns and repeated occurrences of phenomena... thereby gaining an understanding of the meanings humans attach to events.’

The research started with a review of the literature available on work-life balance in Africa, especially Nigeria. Additionally, literature on work-life balance and flexible working in developed economies and other emerging economies in some parts of Asia was reviewed. This was done to help fine-tune the research and to draw upon the various initiatives that have been documented over time. It was discovered from the literature on work-life balance in Europe that WLB tends to be associated predominantly with flexible working (Hegewisch & Gornick, 2011; McGinnity & Whelan, 2009), whereas literature from the US discusses flexible working and other

‘wellness’ programmes, as well as initiatives like employee counselling as part of work-life programmes (Hobson, Delunas & Kesic, 2001).

After scanning literature from developed and some developing countries, the researcher decided there was a need for a pilot study to clarify what is meant by WLB in the Nigerian context. This would also help with the design of the main study, due to limited knowledge and literature available in respect of work and family initiatives in Africa (Annor, 2014, Aryee, 2005, Mapedzahama, 2014).

This research phase was exploratory in nature because it involved gathering general information about the subject matter of the research. First, in line with previous research on WLB in Africa, a qualitative research approach was used because this supports exploratory studies and is particularly suited for studying developmental contexts (Annor, 2014; Barbour, 2014:16; Matthews & Liz, 2010; Mordi et al., 2013). As such, qualitative research enabled the researcher to take a step back from the general understanding of the concept of WLB and see it instead through the eyes of working mothers, HR practitioners and supervisors in Nigeria.

Secondly, based on the gap in the literature on WLB in Nigeria, it was also decided that a qualitative approach would enable the researcher to obtain richer and more detailed data (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). In order to allow some flexibility and ensure that the evidence obtained from this study addresses the broad research question effectively, the administration of semi-structured interviews was chosen as the most appropriate method. According to Saunders and Lewis (2012:151), “*semi-structured interview is*

*a method of data collection in which the interviewer asks about a set of themes using some predetermined questions, but varies the order in which the themes are covered and questions asked- some questions may be omitted if it is considered irrelevant to the participant(s) and new questions could be asked to gain new insight into a theme been investigated)".* Semi-structured interviews allow for some flexibility and thus differ from structured interviews (where questions are standardised and participants answer the same set of questions in the same order) and unstructured interviews (where discussions are informal and participants are allowed to talk freely about a topic with little direction from the interviewer) - (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Semi-structured interviewing provides a space for sharing stories and this allowed respondents to talk extensively about the policies, informal practices and their daily routines, in order to enrich the available knowledge about what WLB means within this Nigerian context (Rossetto, 2014). Additionally, the researcher chose semi-structured interviews because this method benefits from synchronous communication, coupled with the fact that verbal cues could be of immense benefit to the research: the researcher could see when participants were not comfortable with the questions asked and when they were enthusiastic about the issues being discussed.

As discussed in chapters two and three, due to the introduction of a wide variety of related concepts in the discussion of WLB in Africa by earlier researchers (Annor, 2014; Mapedzahama, 2014; Aryee, 2005; Epie & Ituma, 2014), some interview questions were open-ended with appropriate prompts on questions relating to working mothers' work and home spheres,

relationship management and childcare arrangements. This was done to ensure that most of the activities engaged in by working mothers were covered by the study in order to identify areas of balance or conflict, as the case may be.

To gain maximum benefit from the semi-structured interview data, individual case studies were generated to highlight particular themes in greater depth. WLB is an area of research where more information and evidence is needed to provide a robust understanding of the concept within the Nigerian context, and case studies will provide an avenue to present WLB and WLC experiences of working mothers in Nigeria in the form of stories, using themes that reflected the importance of key issues for the participants. Presenting findings in this way summarises what is known about a studied concept and identifies areas needing further research (Vissak, 2010). The case study method, however, can be time-consuming because data can only be converted to cases after data gathering (through interviewing, examination of documentary evidence or ethnography), transcribing and data analysis (Vissak, 2010).

The researcher is a major research instrument in the interview method. In qualitative studies, the researcher needs to use a certain amount of subjectivity in data analysis. The quality of the research therefore depends on the competence, skills and subject-matter knowledge of the researcher - he/she collects data, analyses and interprets information gathered (Kvale, 2007). More specifically, the analysis of interview transcripts, sifting through sentences, looking for patterns within the data (similarities and differences

in responses) and coding bits of texts (discussing a particular theme) which the researcher considers most appropriate based on the ideas they convey, takes time and experience (Burnard, 1994).

In addition, travelling long distances to meet participants can be costly and time-consuming, e.g., the time spent travelling, time spent conducting interviews, rescheduling interviews and the time needed for transcription (Opdenakker, 2006). However, despite the limitations of using semi-structured interviews in research, as discussed above, the inadequacy of a robust understanding of the WLB practices and policies available within the oil and gas sector in Nigeria has meant that semi-structured interviews will be most helpful and appropriate for this study.

#### **4.4 Validity**

Validity means the extent to which a research instrument measures what it is supposed to measure (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). To ensure the validity of the instrument in the research outlined here, the researcher put three measures in place:

- a. Previous literature on work-life balance in emerging economies was reviewed in order to check the instruments used for these research studies. Most of the articles reviewed used qualitative methodologies, including the use of semi-structures interviews (e.g., Annor, 2014; Mordi et al., 2013).
- b. The interview guides were reviewed by the researcher's supervisors before the instrument was administered.

- c. Family members and friends were excluded from the study, so minimising any bias in the data.

#### **4.5 Ethical Considerations**

According to the ESRC (2012:2),

*“The principal aim of the ethics review is, as far as possible, to protect all groups involved in research: participants, institutions, funders and researchers throughout the lifetime of the research and into the dissemination process.”*

In discussing ethical considerations in research, Weathington, Cunningham and Pittenger (2012) stressed the need for a researcher to be mindful and sensitive to moral principles. Part of the University of Warwick’s requirement before commencing fieldwork is to get approval from the Research Ethics Committee. When drafting the information sheet, consent forms and interview guides, the University of Warwick’s regulations on ethical considerations were fully complied with. Any suggestions for restructuring and clarification made by the supervisors were considered and any necessary adjustments were then made. A copy of the interview guide and other relevant forms were submitted to the committee and data collection did not start until after approval was granted in December 2012.

None of the research participants were minors or vulnerable people under the age of 21. There were no immediate or future concerns about the implications of the study on respondents’ safety or job security.

It was decided at the design stage that the aims of the research, as well as individual rights to confidentiality and anonymity, should be explained to participants verbally. Their right of withdrawal and freedom from coercion at any stage during the interview was also communicated.

The research was designed to be audio-taped so that the researcher would have the opportunity to capture the exact words of the participants. This was explained to each participant before the interview. It was after this verbal explanation that the respondents were given the consent form (which had the same conditions outlined) to read and sign. Information that could reveal the identity of participants (e.g., names and workplaces) were not included in the interview questions. Additionally, in the consent form, participants were given the option of either writing their names, nicknames or a pseudonym to identify themselves; what was important was that they filled in the consent form. The venue and time for the interview was fixed in some companies by the gate-keepers or HR practitioners and in some companies by the participants; there was no intrusion on their time and space.

One of the challenges encountered in the course of this study was a call by participants for the research findings to trigger a positive change in the Nigerian government to support working families, thereby reducing the strains experienced by working mothers in Nigeria. During the interview, one question repeatedly asked by the working mothers was along the lines: “what will you do with the output of the research? Are you going to use it to change the status quo or will it be one of those pieces of research that will end up in a library?” This represents one of the dilemmas of being a

researcher and this is supported by Barbour's (2014:98) view of the participants viewing the researcher as a catalyst who can facilitate change. As legitimate as these participants' demands may be, the researcher is not a government official or someone in a position of authority to change state laws. However, it is believed that sharing some of these findings on social media platforms, publishing the findings in academic and non-academic journals, as well as reports meant for public consumption, might encourage the Nigerian government and other stakeholders to create an avenue or a means to address some of the issues raised in this study.

#### **4.6 The pilot study**

Due to the relative novelty of research on WLB in Nigeria, the researcher divided the data collection into two phases: pilot testing and the main study. The pilot study was conducted to test the interview questions within the research environment where the main study would take place (Lagos, Nigeria) to check whether the instruments would work, that the questions were not leading and would not be misinterpreted (Matthews & Liz, 2010). The pilot study also aided in the clarification of some issues, the likely problems to be encountered in the field during the main study, as well as the duration of the interviews. During the pilot phase, the researcher decided to include sectors that are considered most viable within the Nigerian environment: oil and gas, telecommunications, financial services and manufacturing. The researcher believed that having an idea of what



operates within these sectors would provide some flexibility and enable the generation of more information needed to streamline the research.

The pilot interview questions were administered to six working mothers and three human resource practitioners within the different sectors. The pilot study started in April 2013 and lasted three weeks. Based on the information derived from the literature, two interview guides were developed: one for the working mothers and the other for the Human Resource (HR) practitioners. For the working mothers, the interview guide was divided into two sections, with Section A dealing with questions around work routine, household chores, care work, child care arrangements, work-life balance initiatives in use and those provided by the employer, and Section B dealing with demographic information such as age, marital status, and level within the organisation. For the HR practitioners, Section A in the interview guide had questions around their concept of work-life balance, work-life balance policies and HR measures that are peculiar to Nigeria, while Section B had questions around the ratio of male to female employees and the day-to-day responsibilities of HR Practitioners (See Appendix I).

The tables below show the demographic information of HR practitioners and working mothers interviewed for the pilot study.

**Table 4.1: Information about HR Practitioners interviewed- pilot study**

ID	Sector
HR Practitioner 1	Manufacturing

<b>HR Practitioner 2</b>	Indigenous Conglomerate (Manufacturing, oil & gas, financial services and telecommunication)
<b>HR practitioner 3</b>	oil and gas

**Table 4.2: Information about working mothers interviewed- pilot study**

ID	Age	Number of Children	Ages of children	Time taken to and from work daily	Occupation	Sector	Level in the organisation
<b>WM 1</b>	Above 30	2	1 & 3+	4 hours	Marketer	Financial Services (Insurance)	Middle
<b>WM 2</b>	39	3	10, 8 & 4	30 mins.	HR Practitioner	oil and gas	Middle
<b>WM3</b>	34	1 and she is pregnant	3yrs 9 months	2 hours 30 mins.	Accountant	oil and gas	Middle
<b>WM 4</b>	36	4	9,6 and a set of twins(5yrs)	1 hour	Pharmacist	Health Services	Middle
<b>WM 5</b>	+36	4	9,6,4 and 2 yrs	1 hour 30 mins.	HR Manager	Conglomerate	Top
<b>WM 6</b>	34	2	2yrs & 8 months	1 hour 30mins.	Customer Care	Telecommunication	Low

#### **4.6.1 Summary of coding for pilot study**

The pilot study was designed to help in eliciting information that would be relevant to answering the research question and deciding on the appropriateness of interviewing as a research method for this study. Coding was therefore done based on debates within African literature and broad themes that emerged from the pilot interviews.

**Table 4.3: Codes generated from pilot interviews**

Understanding WLB
WLB initiatives <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• WLB initiatives in place</li><li>• WLB initiatives due to challenges in the Nigerian environment</li></ul>
Impediments to WLB <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rural urban migration</li><li>• Presenteeism</li><li>• Lack of discipline</li><li>• Weak Nigerian labour law</li><li>• Associating WLB with women</li><li>• Infrastructure challenges and other environmental issues<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Inadequate social amenities</li><li>▪ Environmental challenges<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Early wake-up and late bedtimes</li><li>○ Commuting time</li></ul></li></ul></li></ul>
Coping strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support from relative or neighbour</li><li>• Self</li><li>• Outsourcing to market<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ School bus and after school care</li><li>▪ House keeper</li><li>▪ Crèche</li></ul></li></ul>

Due to a lack of literature on which to rely, the aim of coding during the pilot testing was to derive broad themes which could provide guidance for the main study. Codes were broadly classified into factors that could affect WLB: commuting time, bedtime and wake-up time, coping strategies/childcare arrangements, understanding of WLB. The transcripts were coded as either working mothers or HR Practitioner nodes (with each interview transcript serving as child nodes, depending on whether they are working mothers or HR Practitioners).

#### **4.6.2 Preliminary findings from pilot testing**

In Lagos, many companies are located in Lagos Island, which is a prosperous and major commercial centre. Accommodation around Lagos Island and its environs is usually expensive and cannot be afforded by many, except top management and expatriates. In reality, the majority of workers live very far from their offices. With most people coming from the same direction towards Lagos Island, coupled with bad roads, traffic jams and congestion are a daily occurrence. Workers therefore have to wake up as early as 3.30am or 4am in order to avoid the traffic (Epie & Ituma, 2014). These workers also have to cope with the same congestion at the close of work on their way home. Some of the working mothers interviewed did not get to sleep earlier than 10pm and they had to wake up early the next day. Commuting time to and from work for the working mothers ranged from 30 minutes to up to four hours. All the working mothers interviewed did not work during the weekends unless they had to.

Standard working hours were usually from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., with a break of roughly 45 minutes to one hour. In a manufacturing company, the HR Practitioner talked about the company having a flexible resumption time (an employee can start anytime between 7.30 to 9 a.m.). However, in Nigerian organisations, employees usually work full-time. Part-time and other forms of flexible working are uncommon (Mordi et al., 2013). Other emerging themes during the data analysis include:

##### **i. Understanding of work-life balance**

It was considered important for the research study to find out respondents' perceptions of work-life balance and whether the concept is perceived differently across cultures. The question "what is your own concept of work-life balance?" was asked. Some of the responses included:

*"For us, it's employees having a great family life outside of the workplace."*

**(HR Practitioner 1, Manufacturing)**

Some respondents understood WLB as not living too far from the workplace. One theme was key in working mothers' definitions of WLB: the ability to optimally juggle work and other commitments with the family/community.

In a collectivist society such as Nigeria, where individual interests are expected to be subordinated to that of the community and extended family (Aryee, 2005; Epie & Ituma, 2014; Okonkwo, 2014), "a commitment to your community" might be included in a definition of WLB, unlike in Western countries.

**ii. Family-friendly policies**

Literature on work-life balance in Europe usually revolves around different forms of flexible working. However, initiatives prevalent within the Nigerian workplaces that were most frequently mentioned when questions around work-life balance were asked include: the provision of staff buses to reduce the stress experienced by employees, the availability of company-funded healthcare schemes (including ante-natal facilities, treatment for sickness,

annual medical screening and also referrals to external clinics), health talks, the provision of financial and sometimes parental counselling and the provision of recreational facilities within the workplace.

This implies that ways of achieving work-life balance are perceived differently across cultures (Kim & Faerman, 2013). It was also discovered that unlike in developed economies where these initiatives are documented, in Nigeria, the initiatives available within the system are mostly informal and undocumented.

### **iii. The development of some WLB initiatives**

The Nigerian Labour Law 1990 allows women to go on maternity leave six weeks before and six weeks after confinement, with not less than fifty percent pay<sup>8</sup>. Generally in Nigeria, companies allow three months annual leave for pregnant workers with full pay (Epie & Ituma, 2014). Additionally, they can enjoy 3 months flexi-time by closing an hour earlier or resuming an hour later than everybody else, in recognition of the need to provide support for their child. Most mothers, however, want to take their three months very close to their Expected Delivery Date (EDD) in order to spend more time with their baby. According to working mother 6, the six-week rule tends to make workers hesitant in disclosing information by not announcing the birth

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.nigeria-law.org/LabourAct.htm>

of their child until after delivery, especially when they give birth earlier than their EDD, in order to be entitled to the full three months maternity leave.

HR Practitioners interviewed in Multinational companies said their companies go a step further by allowing women to take their annual leave (one month) at full pay in addition to their maternity leave (three months), and that this can be delayed until a time of their choosing.

From the interviews with HR practitioners of various companies, it seems that management is considering the option of providing some work-life balance initiatives in the future. This therefore links to the flexible working options seen in many developed countries. These include the provision of day care centres and telecommuting.

#### **iv. Impediments to work-life balance**

As working women around the world strive to successfully negotiate their work and family roles, researchers have identified some barriers to achieving that goal. These barriers might be context-specific (imposed by the challenges present in a particular environment) or because a person belongs to a category of people, for example, families with children (Adenikinju, 2005; Okafor & Amayo, 2006). Some of the impediments discussed by participants during the pilot testing include the challenge of outdated/weak Nigerian labour law, the need to work long hours to signify loyalty/commitment to employers/supervisors (presenteeism) and rural-urban migration (moving from rural areas to Lagos, thereby creating a strain on social amenities/resources leading to traffic jams, erratic power supply and telecommunication systems when demand outstrips supply). HR3 also

said that associating WLB with women gives it gender 'colouration' and since most people in top management are male, WLB tends to be relegated.

**v. Personal survival strategies usually devised by parents**

Nigerian society is communal and the family (nuclear and extended) tends to have a role to play in household and childcare activities. HR practitioners also attested to this fact and argued that Nigeria has an effective communal social system that takes care of eldercare and childcare arrangements and, as such, providing for specific company policies to cater for these might not be necessary.

On the part of working mothers, some of the strategies employed included the use of school buses, crèches, and the use of a house-keeper. On average, working women in the study spent 3-4 hours doing household chores during the week while some worked up to 12 hours on Saturdays and Sundays. The researcher also wanted to know whether there were specific policies in place to help women function effectively at home and within the workplace. The only policy that was mentioned was maternity leave and company policies did not make any other specific provisions. This suggests that any FWAs offered to working mothers by employers tend to be basic, are mainly individualised and more support is expected to be sought from external sources like close and distant relatives.



#### **4.6.3 Lessons learned from pilot testing**

The pilot study was undertaken to test the validity of the research methodology and the interview guides. This was to ensure that pertinent issues were addressed before time, financial and other resources were expended on a larger scale. As with any other research, the researcher had some beliefs and a certain degree of knowledge about the Nigerian environment and likely problems relating to WLB. The pilot study provided an avenue to gain experience, confirm some doubts as well dispel some preconceived notions. Lessons were learned by the researcher which informed the structure of the main study. For example, it was felt that the working mothers would be reticent and might not want to disclose issues relating to their personal lives. In respect of the HR practitioners, there was a belief that they may not want to disclose certain information because it was in their interests to protect the image of their company. These beliefs were actually proved wrong: people wanted to talk about WLB as it was a matter of concern to them and they also wanted to share their own experiences. Some HR practitioners even suggested other companies that could help to provide a robust and detailed information source.

After the interview with the first HR practitioner, it became apparent that it would be preferable to interview someone who is a top or middle level staff in the HR department, rather than for him/her to be an HR Manager. Unlike small organisations, big organisations have sub-departments within HR and by specifying "HR Manager" it might make it harder for the researcher to gain access. More specifically, other lessons learned included:

- During the interviews, the power of silence was reinforced: giving an interviewee time to think more about a question before asking the next question.
- Interviewees were reluctant to answer the question on age. For the main study, this question would be re-framed to reflect age ranges, for example, 25-30, 31-35 etc. It is important to know the age range of respondents to enable the researcher classify respondents according to age range during data analysis.
- Being seen as an insider (a working mother) created some problems because interviewees' responses were sometimes not explicit and there were responses like "you should know ..."
- Most HR practitioners were unaware of the ratio of males to females within their organisations. For the main study, they would have been contacted before the interview to help verify this.
- For the working mothers, work life balance needed to be explained prior to the interview because they were reluctant to say the wrong things. On reflection, this may have affected the data generated. Participants also wanted to know what the research entailed before talking about their personal lives. Although details were provided, the researcher still gave a broad explanation of the aims of the research.

#### **4.7 Impact of pilot testing on the main research design**

The pilot testing provided an avenue to test the research instrument within the environment where the main study would take place. It therefore clarified

that interview questions were well understood by participants and, more importantly, were fit for the study. Semi-structured interviews provided the researcher the opportunity to probe on the concept of WLB more broadly, thereby giving insights into other issues relevant to understanding WLB that were not specifically covered by the interview guide. Analysis of the pilot interview transcripts suggested that participants' discussions were more about conflict and WLB was discussed mainly from the viewpoint of coping strategies used in reducing the effects of such conflicts. This supported the choice of Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) sources of conflict theory as the focal theory for the study because it explicitly highlights different sources of conflict.

Some WLB initiatives (like flexible resumption time, financial counselling, health talks/check-up) described by the participants have not really been the focus of studies conducted in the UK or in previous African studies. As such, it widened the scope of possible WLB initiatives that could be included in the interview guide for the main study.

Narratives from the pilot study also suggested some more issues to be explored in the main study. For example, could the 'gender colouration' issue mean that WLB becomes something linked to women only? Could it possibly impact negatively on gender equality in the workplace, even if it helps women balance work and family issues better?

Finally, responses of the interviewees also uncovered the need for a restructuring of the interview guide for the main study. An example is the categorisation of staff according to what they do. Apart from the top, middle

and low level of employees' job categorisation, companies also have other categories of staff who are regarded as non-permanent or third-party staff. Additionally, the terms of employment of these employees vary with where they belong, e.g. contract workers are usually third party staff and are usually not entitled to some of the benefits (like company-provided medical facilities) of the full-time staff. In the same vein, the pilot study helped identify that HR practitioners at a low level might not have answers to some of the questions asked; top level and possibly mid-level HR practitioners would be more appropriate.

#### **4.8 Overview of the main study**

As with the pilot testing, the main study took place in Nigeria in response to the call by other researchers for an increase into investigations about WLB in Nigeria due to the concentration of WLB literature on developed economies (Epie & Ituma, 2014; Mapedzahama, 2014; Mordi et al., 2013). Additionally, Nigeria is the home of the researcher and it was believed that access would be easier as an insider. Lagos was chosen as the study site because of the following reasons:

- It is one of the main commercial centres in Nigeria and most companies have their Head office or at least a workplace presence there.
- Living in Lagos, just like any other city, is hectic and costly. Research has proved that workers living in Lagos experience a considerable amount of everyday stress (Epie, 2011; Mordi et al., 2013).

Additionally, infrastructure problems and traffic jams in Lagos add to the difficulties faced by working mothers.

Access to organisations was gained by meeting with HR practitioners who were members of the local chapter in Nigeria of a professional organisation, The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), which is the one of the world's largest associations devoted to human resource management. SHRM has many top HR practitioners in Nigeria as members. Most of these HR practitioners acted as gate-keepers and thus facilitated the meeting with other categories of research participants for this study. Most of the interviews with working mothers were conducted in workplace conference rooms (for privacy) or at other convenient locations (canteen, participants' offices or the reception) specified by participants within the workplace.

#### **4.8.1 Justification for industry selection**

In discussing wages and other conditions of service in Nigerian workplaces, Fajana (2005) talked about the monetisation of benefits in the Nigerian oil and gas sector and expatiated on the varied benefits accruing to employees in this sector only, in the form of commuting, utility, furniture, house and security allowances.

Based on the previous broader perspective adopted by earlier researchers in viewing WLB within the Nigerian context, and also relying on the evidence provided by Fajana (2005), the researcher believed that focusing on the oil and gas sector for this study would provide a valuable addition to the

existing research, in respect of initiatives/perks including policies and practices reported in other literature on studies in the Nigerian workplace. Additionally, in the course of reading and digesting the contents of interview transcripts from the pilot testing, it was discovered that HR practitioners and working mothers in all the sectors used in the pilot study provided evidence of maternity leave, casual leave, healthcare schemes and paternity leave. However, in addition to all these listed initiatives, the HR practitioner working in a multinational oil and gas company also talked about staff buses, recreational facilities, clubs, educational assistance and volunteering activities enjoyed by their employees. Additionally, HR practitioners also talked about the possibility of the company introducing more initiatives in the future. Among all the sectors included in the pilot study, work-life balance initiatives in the oil and gas sector appeared to be the most robust. To summarise, the researcher decided to choose the oil and gas sector in Nigeria for this study because documented evidence (Ovadjie & Ankomah, 2001; Fajana 2005) shows that this sector has more developed family-friendly practices so there is a higher probability of finding examples of best practice which can be adopted or rolled out across other sectors in Nigeria. Also, there was an expectation that although MNCs and indigenous operators in the oil and gas sector in Nigeria may have good WLB practices, what is considered best practice may differ in both MNCs and indigenous companies. This deduction was based on earlier studies that documented that subsidiaries tend to transfer the adoption of parent company policies to subsidiary locations (Fajana, 2005).

#### **4.8.2 Gaining access**

The data collection phase started with a visit to the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR Nigeria), which is the agency charged with the statutory responsibility of ensuring compliance with the Petroleum laws, regulations and guidelines in the oil and gas sector in Nigeria (DPR Nigeria, 2014). The agency issued introduction letters for the multinational companies which were taken by the researcher to each of the companies to be included in the research. The SHRM member forum also circulated email messages, thus increasing the number of contacts. Data collection was due to start in November 2013.

For the Multinational Companies (MNCs), there was an initial informal meeting about the researcher's request, with discussions around the aims of the research and what the researcher was going to do with the output. Some agreed to be audio-taped after consulting their public relations or legal departments while one of the MNCs immediately rejected being audio-taped. After the researcher's requests were received, there were formal procedures to be followed and confidentiality agreements to be completed. The researcher was then allocated a workspace, an ID card was given for access to the different respondents' offices and a time span of one month was allowed, at which point the research had to be completed. An officer was placed in charge of taking the researcher around and helping with any challenges encountered during her time there. The officer in charge

thereafter produced a time-table based on the number of respondents, their departments and their availability.

The indigenous companies also had initial informal meetings with the researcher about the aims of the research, the issue of confidentiality and the resources needed. However, their procedures were more informal than that of their multinational counterparts. Interactions with the officers were mainly informal and the decision to be audio-taped or not was decided by the respondents. The indigenous companies did not fix a time span for the completion of the interviews, which depended on the availability of the participants.

After gaining access, the researcher submitted an introduction letter from the University of Warwick, a cover letter from the researcher outlining the purpose of the research, the researcher's requests, a guarantee of confidentiality and the researcher's contact details. The cover letter from the DPR was also attached.

The time lag between the original request and getting final approval was around 6 weeks and the rationale behind this is supported by Saunders and Lewis (2012:63) that "*the larger the organisation, the more time-consuming the access negotiation may be*".

At the end of the sixth week, some companies had responded and appointments were being fixed. Most of the correspondence was through e-mail messages, although phone calls were occasionally made. The



researcher followed up with the respondents chosen by the organisation based on participants' eligibility criteria provided by the researcher.

It can be argued that an element of bias could have been introduced into the sample since the organisation vetted the participants, with minimal input from the researcher; managers may have chosen people who they knew would tell a "good news story". However, what the researcher found when she interviewed the women was that they were in fact very willing to open up about their own experiences of WLC in general and did not seem hampered by the views of employers or managers. In addition, relying on the expertise of the managers, based on the demographic and personal information known to them about participants, proved to be more valuable than the researcher having to choose from a pool of participants who she knew little or nothing about.

#### **4.8.3 Design of the interview guide**

Each of the three interview guides started with a brief introduction. While the interview guide for the supervisors had only one section, the interview guides for working mothers and HR practitioners were divided into two sections. Copies of the interview guides are provided in the Appendix II, III and IV. The content of each of the interview guides for the three categories of participants are as follows:

- **Working mothers**

Section A was designed to collect information about the mother's typical working day: activities at work, childcare, care for elderly relatives and after work activities. It also contained questions about the participant's perception of WLB, relationships with colleagues and supervisors, as well as WLB initiatives provided by the employer. The second section was designed to collect demographic information about the participant's age, marital status, number of children and department where the mother worked.

- **HR Practitioners**

Section A was designed to elicit responses about WLB and the company's policies around this. Contained in this section were the company's future plans in respect of WLB and the HR practitioners' perception about the impediments to WLB in Nigeria. Section B contained questions relating to the male: female ratio across departments and the departments where males and females are typically found.

- **Supervisors**

The interview guide for supervisors was designed to collect responses about their perceptions of WLB, the challenges they encountered in managing people with family responsibilities and how they had been tackling those challenges with examples requested.

#### **4.8.4 Selection of research participants**

The research participants for the pilot and main studies were university graduates and professionals in their various fields. The researcher made a particular request to the officer allocated to help the researcher during the fieldwork for the inclusion of working mothers and supervisors who worked in male-dominated departments. This decision was made because previous literature has described the additional strain experienced by females in male-dominated departments. This strain is sometimes due to job schedule inflexibility and/or the difficulty of combining certain occupations and family responsibilities (Jagacinski, 1987).

The criteria for choosing the participants were as follows:

- **Working mothers**

Given the long-standing normative expectations of women's roles as good mothers and wives within the African context, these responsibilities do not shift even if she is employed (Epie & Ituma, 2014). Mothers working in the oil and gas industry in Nigeria who have at least one child under the age of 11 were chosen because research has demonstrated that families with younger children experience more work-life conflict than families with older children (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

- **HR practitioners**

The researcher was not specific about the designation of the HR staff because it was discovered during the pilot study that responsibilities vary with the size of the organisation. Smaller companies tend to have HR

generalists and the Head of HR will be involved in compensation, training and all other aspects of HR, while these functions tend to be decentralised in Multinationals/bigger companies. The important requirement was that HR practitioner must be at the top end of middle management or in top management for him/her to possess the knowledge required for the interview, which is, understanding the policy environment of the organisation. For example, one HR practitioner did not have any knowledge of how work-life balance is perceived at the Board level because she had not had the opportunity to operate at that level (her transcript was therefore excluded from the analysis).

- **Supervisors**

Supervisors who were included in this study were those with at least one person with family responsibilities working within their team. This was to enable an understanding of their perceptions about working with people with family responsibilities, the challenges they have been facing and how those challenges have been tackled over time.

Samples were chosen through a mixture of self-selection, snowballing and purposive sampling methods. Saunders and Lewis (2012) defined self-selection sampling as *a type of non-probability sampling in which possible sample members are asked to identify themselves as willing to take part in the research* (p.140). Saunders and Lewis (2012) also defined snowball sampling as *a type of non-probability sampling in which, after the first sample member, subsequent members are identified by earlier sample*

*members (p.139) and purposive sampling as a type of non-probability sampling in which the researcher's judgement is used to select the sample members based on a range of possible reasons and premises (p.138).*

E-mails were sent to employees who met the eligibility criteria either as working mothers, HR practitioners or supervisors, by the officer allocated to the project in each of the companies. Employees who were interested in the topic also spoke with their colleagues whom they felt might be willing to participate, either because they had discussed the topic earlier or because they were part of the women's network within the workplace (snowballing). After the self-selection sampling method, respondents who signified an interest went through a second phase of purposive sampling which was conducted by the officers allocated to the researcher. The decision about which participants should take part in the study was made by the officers based on the respondents' family background (those who were just starting their families and more likely to experience more conflict in balancing work and family responsibilities and, as such, were in the best position to answer the research questions). The researcher was also able to speak to a member of the women's network in one of the multinationals visited. For some smaller companies, however, the participants were chosen by the person allocated to the project based on his/her knowledge of employees' work and family responsibilities.

#### **4.8.5 General information about participants.**

The researcher interviewed thirty working mothers, eight HR practitioners and ten supervisors within the oil and gas sector in Nigeria. The tables below present general information about the different categories of participants.

**Table 4.4: Information about HR practitioners- main study**

<b>HR Practitioner</b>	<b>Company</b>
HR 1	Multinational
HR 2	Indigenous
HR 3	Indigenous
HR 4	Indigenous
HR 5	Multinational
HR 6	Multinational
HR 7	Indigenous
HR 8	Multinational

**Table 4.5: Information about supervisors- main study**

<b>Supervisors</b>	<b>Company</b>	<b>Department</b>
LM1(without working mother)	Indigenous	Engineering
LM2	Indigenous	Managing Director
LM3	Indigenous	Technical and operational excellence
LM4	Indigenous	Supply chain
LM5	Multinational	HR
LM6	Multinational	Public and government affairs
LM7	Multinational	Geosciences and Reservoir
LM8	Multinational	Administration
LM 9	Multinational	Finance
LM 10	Multinational	Development (Engineering)

**Table 4.6: Demographic information of working mothers- main study**

<b>Mother</b>	<b>Department</b>	<b>MNC Vs Ind.*</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Ages of children</b>	<b>Household Arrangements</b>	<b>Wake-up time</b>	<b>Bedtime</b>
WM1	Customer Service	Ind.	Middle	41-50	15, 11,7 and 3 years	Nanny	5am	12am
WM2	Customer Service	Ind.	Low	31-40	8 months	None	4:30am	10-10:30pm
WM3	Customer Service	Ind.	Middle	31-40	4 and 2 years	Lesson teacher and nanny		11pm
WM4	Customer Service	Ind.	Low	31-40	21 months	Nanny and dry-cleaner	5:45am	
WM5	Engineering	Ind.	Middle	21-30	4 months	Husband, mum, mother-	4am	

						in-law other relatives		
WM6	Engineering	Ind.	Middle	31-40	4 years	Maid and nanny		
WM7	HR	MNC	Middle	41-50	6 months	Nanny	4:30am	
WM8	Development (Engineering)	MNC	Middle	31-40	6 months	Aunt and nanny	5am	9:30pm
WM9	Contract	MNC	Middle	31-40	Twins; 3 years	Self, after school care, nanny	5:30am	10:30pm
WM10	Petroleum Engineering	MNC	Middle	31-40	13,10 and 7 years	Children and a young nanny	4am	12am
WM11	Drilling	MNC	National Expatriate	31-40	9 months	Domestic help	5am	10pm
WM12	HR	Ind.	Low	31-40	2 years and 6 months	School bus, mum, husband, domestic help	5am	12am
WM13	Petroleum Engineer	Ind.	Middle	31-40	3 years and 7 months	2 domestic helps	4:45am	12am
WM14	Facility (Engineering)	MNC	Middle	31-40	4 and 1 year	Mum-in-law, nanny and domestic help	5:30am	
WM15	Geology	MNC	Middle	31-40	6 and 2 years old	Nanny, husband when nanny is not around	6:30am	10pm
WM16	Supply chain	Ind.	Middle	41-50	16 and 9 years	School bus, boarding school, maid	5:30am	11pm
WM17	Security	MNC	Middle	31-40	4 and 3 years	Mum and nanny	5am	9pm
WM18	Development	MNC	Middle	31-40	3 years	Widowed; self	4:45am	
WM19	Field Operations	MNC	Middle	31-40	Less than a year	Mum, husband and house keeper	5am	10pm
WM20	Field operations	MNC	Low	31-40	10 years	Make shift house-keeper	4-5am	10-11pm
WM21	HR	MNC	Middle	31-40	5 and 3 years	Nanny	5:45am	11pm
WM22	Corporate services	Ind.	Low	21-30	8 months	Nanny and domestic help	4:30am	10pm
WM23	Admin. - Facility maintenance	MNC	Low	31-40	8,5 and 1 year	Relatives, drycleaner, nanny and maid	4:30am	11:30pm
WM24	Procurement	Ind.	Middle	31-40	14 months	Nanny and domestic help	5:45am	11pm



WM25	Supply chain	MNC	Middle	31-40	5 and 3 years	2 nannies and parents	5am	9pm
WM26	Development (Engineering)	MNC	Middle	31-40	8 and 6 years	Husband, nanny, cook and driver	6am	10pm
WM27	Receptionist	Ind.	Low	21-30	18 months	Domestic help	5:10am	10pm
WM28	Finance	MNC	Middle	21-30	14 months	Crèche, mum and maid	4:30am	
WM29	Retail	MNC	Middle	21-30	4 years and 15 months	Self and husband	5:30am	12pm
WM 30	Contract	MNC	Middle	31-40	8 and 9 years	Self, after school care, elder sister, nanny,	5am	11pm

\*Multinational Company Vs Indigenous

Of the 30 working mothers interviewed, twelve worked for indigenous companies while eighteen worked for multinational oil companies. All the working mothers interviewed were married except one who was widowed. Seven (23%) of the respondents were low level staff while twenty-two (73%) were middle level staff. One person was not a permanent staff member (national expatriate) in her company and therefore did not fit into the top, middle or low categories. Five (17%) of the respondents were in the age range 21-30, twenty-two (73%) were within the age range 31-40 while three (10%) were in the age range 41-50.

All but one of the working mothers had some form of childcare and domestic outsourcing measure in place to manage responsibilities at home.

#### **4.8.6 Data collection phase**

##### **Before the interview**

The main study was delayed until January 2014 because the majority of companies were focused upon the end of year closure of their books and other activities.

After arranging appointment dates, phone calls and SMS messages were sent to interested participants a day before the appointment as a reminder. The aims of the research and their right to anonymity and confidentiality were explained to each of the participants on the day of the interview, after which they were given the consent forms to sign. Full ethical procedures were followed (for more, see “Ethical considerations”).

The research was designed to be audio-taped so that the researcher would have the opportunity to capture the exact words/sentences of the participants. However, some respondents had reservations about some of the items outlined on the consent forms such as being audio-taped and the use of the information generated during the research process for further research. These respondents were told to cross out anything that they were uncomfortable with and these concerns were taken into consideration before, during and after the interviews. In respect of participants who preferred not to have their interviews audio-taped, note-taking was used as an alternative. All participants understood the contents of the consent form.

### **During and after the interview**

All the interviews were conducted in English because all participants were fluent English speakers and this removed the need for translation of the transcripts. Interviews with working mothers and HR practitioners lasted for between forty-five minutes and one hour on average, while those with supervisors lasted for approximately twenty minutes.

Adopting Barbour (2014)'s recommendations, the interviews started with open-ended questions, with the later part including more specific questions. This was to ensure that the interviews did not appear intrusive to the participants.

Embedded in the interview guides were prompts to serve as aids to the researcher to cross-check that no important point had been left out. On some occasions, there was no need to use the prompts because the participants introduced these issues themselves. For example, there may have been no need to ask about the childcare arrangements in use by a working mother if she talked about these while discussing her daily routine. Also, given the semi-structured nature of the interviews which accommodated room for deviation in questions, as long as it was relevant to answering the research questions, some mothers answered additional questions based on their responses. Insights from previous interviews were included in future interviews to accommodate relevant questions that had not been thought of initially.

While some participants responded to the questions asked without giving any additional information, others gave detailed descriptions which led a few to talk about issues that were outside the focus of the research. At such times, the researcher tried to call them back sensitively. Within the Nigerian culture, any interruptions would have been regarded as rude.

After each interview, notes were taken in a research diary to record experiences in the field, to document the researcher's thoughts, feelings and actions to be taken during subsequent interviews. Immediately after each interview, the audio-recorded interviews were usually transferred to another storage device to prevent any accidental deletion. The researcher also tried as much as time permitted to start the transcription of the interviews almost immediately, especially for interviews where audio-recording was not allowed.

#### **4.8.7 Challenges encountered before and during the interview**

At the early stage of the data collection process, one of the indigenous companies selected for the study refused to grant access to the researcher. This was because the period coincided with the time when management was having an internal problem with the Trade Unions, coupled with the fact that this research focused on employees and the company policies.

Most of the respondents were quite friendly and were willing to share their experiences. However, some of the respondents refused to be audio-taped despite the fact that the researcher reassured them of the confidentiality of the information divulged. For these respondents, the researcher took notes

as much as was possible and converted these to transcripts immediately afterwards. Those respondents refusing to be audio-taped were much more relaxed during the interview as a result.

Some of the HR practitioners who were interviewed and who were initially enthusiastic about taking part later refused to respond to the researcher's follow-up calls or emails, requesting other documentary evidence to substantiate the interviews.

#### **4.9 Reflexivity of the researcher**

Generally, research is expected to be a value free relationship between research subject and research object. However, achieving this completely in social research is a herculean task (Bryman, 2016, Mies, 1993). In interviews, ignoring the dynamics between the interviewer and participants has been regarded as a *"lifeless or less than effective interviewing"* (Chirban, 1996) and *"the dynamics of the interaction and relationship developed in the interviewing process, when tapped, could provide the most revealing portrait of an interviewee"* (p. xii). Oakley (1981) and Bryman (2016) therefore recommended that rapport has to be generated between the interviewer and his/her participants, but that it should be curtailed to ensure that the information retrieved is valid and bias is reduced as much as possible. In this study, there was no prior relationship between the researcher and the participants before the interviews and in most cases the researcher and participants had their first meeting at the time of the

interview. Additionally, interviews were conducted with a certain level of formality, where possible.

In establishing the concept of reflexivity, Mann (2016) argued that the researcher's beliefs and values could have an impact on the research and at the same time, England (1994) emphasised the need for the researcher to integrate themselves into their research in order to understand events through the eyes of participants. In relation to this study, as a Nigerian working mother herself, the researcher's experiences could have affected the conduct of the research. It should be noted however, that the researcher tried to minimise bias in the conduct of the interviews as much as possible, by ensuring that she did not express her opinion verbally or otherwise, in respect of the issues discussed.

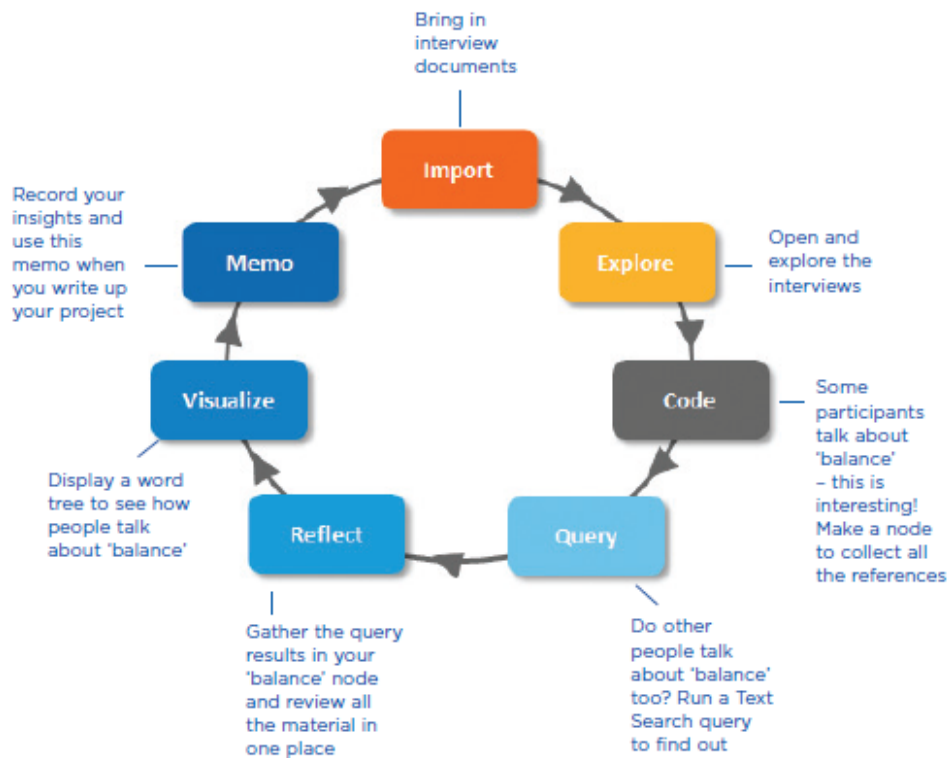
More specifically, feminists have argued that women's issues are better understood by female social scientists because they are better equipped, based on their knowledge and experience (Mies, 1993). In another vein, female social scientists have previously reported that women participants are more eager to speak with female researchers (Finch, 1993, Mies, 1993). It can be argued that being viewed as an insider and a working mother by the participants might affect the validity of the research and listening to the conflicts experienced by these working mothers in their daily lives, with the expectation of some level of empathy from the researcher, could create a challenge. However, contrary to the belief that researchers' position as insiders would affect the validity of the research, empirical evidence shows that participants in studies where researchers were seen as insiders were

not only relaxed and comfortable with the presence of insiders but also that there was increased trust in sharing their stories (Price, 2008, Van der Meulen, 2011) and they sometimes discovered more about themselves (Chirban, 1996). In the study being discussed here, being a part of the community that the researcher is studying helped in understanding the realities these working mothers were experiencing. More importantly, it helped create empathy, as the researcher observed, listened, transcribed and analysed the data.

#### **4.10 Data Analysis**

The audio files of the interviews were transcribed by the researcher, alongside the handwritten transcripts from those interviews which were not audio-taped, and all transcripts were imported into Nvivo. Nvivo is a software application used for qualitative data analysis and it helps manage, explore and find patterns in data (QSR, 2013). The researcher listened to the audio files and read the interview transcripts many times in order to identify the recurring themes. These themes were coded as nodes. The development of coding will be explained further in the next two chapters. The picture below shows the path in exploring a particular theme:

**Figure 4- 1: Path in exploring a theme**



**Source: QSR, 2013:5**

#### **4.11 Summary**

This chapter contains an introduction, information about the epistemological framework and research design, findings from pilot testing and background information from the main study. The use of semi-structured interviews facilitated the generation of a rich body of data that will enhance the understanding of WLB within the Nigerian context from working mothers, their supervisors, and HR practitioners. Although quantitative analysis provides numerical description that could be useful for summaries of data and generalisation of findings, it provides a narrower and superficial dataset



that might not provide a deep understanding of a concept like WLB that is relatively new within the Nigerian environment. Survey questions could also be interpreted differently by respondents whereas conducting interviews provide an avenue for clarifying the meaning of questions.

The preparation prior, during and after the interviews was discussed, in addition to the challenges encountered during the data collection process. The next two chapters will be presenting the findings from these interviews with the three categories of participants.

## **CHAPTER 5: WORK LIFE CONFLICT (WLC) AMONG WORKING MOTHERS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Having a family and pursuing a career can be fulfilling but negotiating between work, family and other activities of interest in an individual's life can also be challenging (Elman & Gilbert, 1984; Okonkwo, 2014). This challenge is imposed by varying expectations at work, home and society. As stated in Chapters two and three, the challenges in balancing the responsibilities arising from work and family can lead to conflict, especially for working mothers (Beutell & Greenhaus, 1982; Brough & Kelling, 2002; Crouter, 1984).

This chapter examines the main sources of conflict for working mothers in Nigeria using the sources of conflict model developed by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985): time-based, strain-based and behaviour-based conflicts (For more information on time, strain and behaviour-based conflict, see chapters two and three). Conflict can also be reinforced through the roles played by institutions. From a macro-level, the enforcement of patriarchal values in society, a lack of basic amenities and having labour laws that do not cater for the needs of families can increase the conflicts experienced by working mothers. As such, the role played by various institutions in Nigeria (government, organisation, employee representatives, HR practitioners and supervisors) in terms of WLC will also be discussed in this chapter.

In this chapter and the next, the results of the data analysis will be presented. Data was collected and analysed with the research question in

mind: understanding WLB experiences of working mothers by taking a conflict perspective. The table below presents a broad description of codes generated by grouping the conflicts experienced by working mothers, while a more detailed analysis is presented in subsequent sections.

**Table 5-1: Thematic codes for understand WLC**

<b>Sources of conflict</b>	<b>Thematic nodes for sources of conflict</b>
<b>Time-based</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weekend work</li> <li>• Inflexible work schedule</li> <li>• Hectic work schedule</li> <li>• Long commuting time</li> </ul>
<b>Strain-based</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weekend work</li> <li>• Wake-up time</li> <li>• Hectic work schedule</li> <li>• Guilt</li> <li>• Commuting time</li> <li>• Bedtime</li> </ul>
<b>Behaviour-based</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work flexibility Vs career advancement</li> <li>• Presenteeism</li> <li>• Preference for male employees</li> <li>• Gender stereotyping</li> <li>• Conflict between work and home expectations</li> </ul>

## **5.2 Time-based conflict**

Workplaces in Nigeria are usually located in urban areas, which are typically more expensive, and living costs are beyond the budgets of most families.

Workers and their families therefore tend to live further away from their place of work and have to endure long commutes. This means waking up early to avoid the traffic congestion which is prevalent in larger cities, and especially Lagos. From the analysis of interviews, twenty working mothers woke up before or at 5am, while only three working mothers went to bed before 10pm (data presented in table 4.6 in the previous chapter). They also spent many hours in traffic after finishing work, especially because everybody in Lagos tends to finish at the same time:

*“... infrastructure has to do with commuting time. So even where you don’t spend all the time in the office, people spend the rest of the time coming to the office...”*

**(HR 1, Multinational Company)**

Generally, findings from the present study support earlier research on work and family in Nigeria (Mordi et al., 2013; Epie and Ituma, 2014) by providing further evidence of work-related time-based conflict. A working mother within the oil and gas sector in Nigeria talked about working long hours including weekends, commuting long distances, and hectic and inflexible work schedules:

*“I close here by 5pm but that doesn’t mean it’s like a normal thing that I must close by 5pm. Sometimes, it can stretch to like after 8 pm in the evening depending on the workload for that day. I may stay behind. Sometimes, 6 or 7pm like that..., I have been here like after 8 pm... We work weekends if management instructs that everybody should come to work. Then, we work weekends too if we have a backlog of work that we’ve not been able to meet up with, like the year is gradually*

*coming to an end and we may work weekends to be able to meet up and close up the books...*

*... well, I won't allow my home to suffer because I'm a working mother and at the same time I don't want my work to also suffer, as a working mother. So, I try to balance it, maybe the only thing I suffer is my sleep. I don't get to sleep enough. If I should sleep by 12am that means by 5am I should be up again. Sometimes, I don't even sleep by 12am; sometimes I sleep like some minutes to one o'clock in the morning and by 5am, I have to be up again because we have to get the home front ready and I also need to come to work to do the one in the office."*

**(WM1, Customer Service, Indigenous Company)**

This quote above typifies how devoting more time to work affects the working mother's other activities; it affect family time and time for personal activities-sleep. Although both types of time-based sources of conflict have been researched previously, more accounts of work-related sources of time-based conflict have been reported than family-related time-based conflict.

### **5.3 Strain-based Conflict**

As discussed in chapters two and three, Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) divided strain-based conflicts into work-related and family-related. While work-related strain-based conflict is thought to affect workers in general (Epie & Ituma, 2014), it has been documented that women with family responsibilities experience more family-related strain-based conflict because they are usually the primary caregivers; they care for their husbands, children and other relatives and this strain can sometimes be transferred to team members or colleagues who have to take over their

responsibilities at work (Beutell & Greenhaus, 1983; Beutell & Greenhaus, 1982).

Running a double full-time shift (family and work) is likely to be a source of strain as argued by earlier research on work and family in Nigeria (Akanji, 2013; Epie, 2010; Okafor & Amayo, 2006). Although there have been some positive findings in existing research around negotiating between family and work (Brough et al., 2014; Carlson et al., 2006; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006), “conflict” has been a recurring theme in the majority of African studies, along with reports upon the health impacts of conflict, such as stress and fatigue (Agarwal, 2014; Agyemang et al., 2014; Akanji, 2013; Annor, 2014; Epie & Ituma, 2014; Mapedzahama, 2014). Working mothers in the study constructed various narratives to portray strain-based symptoms of conflict:

*“I know that in Nigeria, there is the challenge for women really...a lot of places don’t realise that women have a cycle. When a woman gets married, the first six, seven years if she starts having children immediately, she needs to have some flexibility. Children may fall sick and there is nothing you can do about it...today one child falls sick... you can’t tell all your children to fall sick at the same. While one is recovering the second one may fall sick (laughs)... and the next thing is that you have to start explaining that the second one just caught his own flu...”*

**(WM 16, Supply Chain, Indigenous Company)**

A typical working day for all the mothers interviewed was hectic: this usually involved waking up early and doing some early morning chores before setting out to work. A working mother (WM 29, Retail department, Multinational Company) who preferred not to have her voice recorded during the interview described her daily work schedule as hectic, where she had to monitor forty stations in Lagos. She was on her feet most of the time because she had to move around a lot to conduct site inspections. In particular, she talked about having developed health problems as a result of her hectic schedule and her daily tasks even led to her changing her choice of shoes, from high-heeled to low-heeled, due to the physical demands of her job. Drawing from discussions outlined in chapters two and three, findings from this study support evidence from both advanced countries (Bartolomé & Evans, 1980) and Nigeria (Stephen, 2014), which show that workers go through emotional and physical stress due to pressures from the home or due to work demands. Other working mothers described similar busy schedules with many deadlines to meet:

*“...there is pressure at work. The pressure at work is not much of being on your feet, it is more of being on your computer... especially in operations there is a lot of pressure because a lot of things are tied to operations, you are looking at the facility... even if your boss is going to be sympathetic, you need the plant to be running because that is the heart of the company... So I think that is the added pressure in operations because if there is an issue now and you need to trouble-shoot it and your child is sick, you can't say 'can you hold on for one*

*day, let me attend to my family' (laughs)... we are talking of how many million barrels of oil... (laughs)".*

**(WM20, Engineer, Multinational Company)**

The quote above provides further evidence that supports earlier research that the availability of formal (family-friendly policies) and informal support (supervisor and colleagues' support) to employees cannot in itself reduce WLC if there is no reduction in the targets and workload of employees (Sutton & Noe, 2005).

Although there was a general narrative of hectic work schedules, mothers differed in respect to their frequency. While some experienced stress and fatigue in the daily course of their jobs, others experienced strain at particular periods:

*"There are really high peak seasons where it is crazy; it depends on the rig, it depends on the risks and it depends on the problems we are encountering while drilling. It depends on so many things... we know that it is an erratic business; some days are crazy and some days are quiet ..."*

**(WM 24, Procurement, Indigenous Company)**

Working mothers' daily routines created an accumulation of stress from combining the responsibilities emanating from two different roles (work and home), as well as that imposed by the environment. WM1, while describing



how tired she felt at the end of the working day said she usually wished she could rest and sleep. Another working mother commented:

*“There was another day that I came back and I was so pissed off and I said, ‘today I am not cooking. Everybody should go and eat bread’. My point is that it is really challenging for the mother.”*

**(WM 10, Engineer, Multinational Company)**

Mothers were asked “Can you describe in one sentence how you feel most times after each day?” All but two working mothers (WM 4 and WM 5) used words like “tired”, “stressed”, “feeling guilty” and “exhausted”. For those working mothers who complained about stress, some felt fulfilled despite the stress in their lives, while others portrayed a feeling of guilt after a day’s work. WM 4 also highlighted how she could feel positive about work even in the absence of time for relaxation:

*“Working gives me some kind of fulfilment. I am not at home; legs stretched and waiting for my husband to come in... no”*

The rigidity of the working schedule within the Nigerian environment leaves little room for flexibility for workers generally. As such this suggests that in addition to the time-based WLC this may cause, it is likely to cause strain, stress and fatigue for these working mothers in Nigeria. This strain is exhibited in narratives describing the early wake up time and late bedtime for working mothers despite the fact that a lot of energy will have been

sapped while commuting long distances to and from work. Work-related stressors will therefore have a negative effect on the effective performance of the working mothers at home.

It should be noted that despite the pressure at work experienced by working mothers, the role of the organisation in making the negotiation between work and family easier for the employee was acknowledged by many. For example, WM13, a petroleum engineer in an indigenous company talked extensively about a policy that was introduced in her workplace which gave employees five days leave in a year outside their regular annual leave days, to do whatever they considered important. Although respondents acknowledged the role of their employers in reducing the strain through the initiation of a few policies, the fact remains that the majority of mothers still experienced stress from the physical and psychological demands of their jobs (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

Summarily, in line with the literature, unlike in western countries where working women report both work and family-related conflicts, Nigerian women appear not to report high levels of family-related strain based conflict (Annor, 2014, Okonkwo, 2014). This can be seen as one of the differences between WFC experienced by working women in the West and working women in Africa.

In spite of this lack of substantive evidence, the data from this study shows that there are occasional accounts of family-related strain-based sources of conflict. For example, two supervisors narrated their experiences of noticing

that the productivity of working mothers in their team who were high-flyers were reduced because of family-related causes, such as conflict with a mother-in-law, infertility or delaying resumption from maternity leave due to the need to attend to family issues. The next section discusses behaviour-based sources of WLC.

#### **5.4 Behaviour-Based Conflict**

Companies operate primarily to make a profit and to maximise shareholders' wealth and as such are likely to value employees who show commitment towards the achievement of the company's mission and vision. Within the African context, aspects of the employment relationship are determined by the forces of demand and supply, leaving the employee with little bargaining power (Mordi et al., 2013). Working long hours is therefore common, especially because unemployment rates are high and being employed is seen as a necessary sacrifice for the family (Kinnunen, Mauno, Geurts & Dikkers, 2005; Mordi et al., 2013):

*“...the culture in many organisations in Nigeria is that effort is measured rather than results. So quite clearly, the impression in many organisations is that... you find it in some industries that the longer you stay at work, the more committed you are and the more hardworking you are.”*

**(HR 1, Multinational Company)**

Marsden, Kalleberg and Cook (1993) argued that men with family commitments are more likely to be perceived as committed because employment remains a priority to support the family. A working mother commented:

*“I have concluded it is a man’s world because you can’t match up with the guys because I know some of them stay quite late. Unless your kids are grown-ups and they are in higher institutions or they are in boarding schools then you can match up with the men.”*

**(WM 10, Engineer, Multinational Company)**

Empirical evidence has suggested that presenteeism (working when ill or working long hours) is more prevalent during a restructuring exercise or during an economic downturn where there is a high level of job insecurity (Johns, 2010). Relating this to the Nigerian context, the economy was affected by the recent global economic crisis. Coupled with the fact that there is very high youth unemployment and an absence of social security, decent employment may not be seen as a priority when compared with retaining one’s employment (Atilola, 2012). As discussed in the literature review section of this thesis, presenteeism has been linked to the perception of commitment by employees (Johns, 2008; 2010; Simpson, 1998). Women who cannot put in extra hours after work because of family responsibilities might therefore be viewed as less committed (Lewis, 1997). Previous research shows that presenteeism has been linked more to men than women (Chovwen, 2007), suggesting that men sometimes view working

long hours as part of the demands of the job while women are more conscious of keeping to normal working routine.

Generally, there is a perception that presenteeism is valued in some organisations in Nigeria and it is one of the factors participants attributed to the slow evolution of flexible working, compared to, for example, the UK (Fagan et al., 2012). WM20 and HR1, at different points during their interviews, agreed that the Nigerian working environment is such that superiors prefer to see their subordinates physically working in the office. However, there were also several narratives from the interviews with supervisors and HR practitioners that suggest that most companies are moving away from a focus on presenteeism. One working mother (WM21) also corroborated this by narrating an experience she had when she had to come back to her office at 7pm which was quite unusual for her. She discovered that her official entry card did not work and she had to call one of her colleagues in technical support to help. It transpired that this was a deliberate control put in place by management to ensure that staff do not work beyond a certain time. Other evidence from this study suggests that presenteeism is less valued in multinational companies because there is the pressure to uphold global minimum standards. Many MNCs are pushing the focus away from rewarding time spent in the office to being able to actually ensure employees' performances are rated against clear tasks and targets that are measurable.

Most literature on WLC in Africa has concentrated on time-based and strain-based sources of conflict with little discussion of behaviour-based sources

of WLC (Annor, 2014). In instances where conflicts between expectations from work and family roles have been reported, this has either been in particular occupations or in relation to women in management positions (Omar & Ogenyi, 2004). More specifically, behaviour-based sources of conflict discussed by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) can be applied within the Nigerian context by considering gender stereotyping and the impact on career and differences in the perception of women in subordinate and superior roles and the impact of work flexibility on career advancement.

The traditional sexual division of labour (male breadwinner, female home-maker) model suggests that men are likely to be viewed as more committed than females because they have been charged with the responsibility of providing for the needs of the family while the role of women is to nurture (Marsden et al., 1993). As in other countries, gender stereotyping has led to the general assumption that work-life balance issues are for female employees, especially because work-life arrangements are usually taken up by women who need job flexibility (Hakim, 2006, Jenkins, 2004). However, recent research has suggested that over the years, men have increased the time spent on domestic chores and childcare although women still do more, even if they work full-time (Lyonette & Crompton, 2015). Narratives to support this argument were presented by participants. For example, a working mother in the research described here remarked:

*“I have found out that a lot of the men have actually had to do things that traditionally are women’s roles. A colleague of mine took a day off*

*because his kids were sick just this same way I will take a day off because my kid was sick... Men also say 'my wife just gave birth, I am not going to be around for like a week or so' and they come in tired and say they have been up all night and you give them another day off because they have been up all night... their wives just gave birth."*

**(WM 26, Engineering, Multinational Company)**

The challenge of the glass-ceiling for women's careers, as described by researchers, is present in many organisations around the world, including Nigeria. As a result, few women are in management positions and these women might need to put in extra effort to prove they are at least as productive and efficient as their male colleagues (Fakeye, George, & Owoyemi, 2012). Putting in extra effort might involve working late which can lead to fatigue, especially for a working mother. For example, WM 30, a manager working in the contract department of a MNC, explained how difficult it was for her to manage her time because of the need to meet increasing expectations and other responsibilities arising from work and family. She further argued that meeting job expectations is challenging for a woman at management level because her male colleagues have limited household responsibilities.

Despite evidence of the negative effects of gender stereotyping (Kray et al., 2001; Chiloane-Tsoka, 2012; Betz, Ramsey & Sekaquaptewa, 2013), the reality remains that the full-time working norm in Nigeria makes it hard for women to navigate within family and work spheres. Some of the mothers

interviewed in this study reported additional pressures on them because they are women and, most importantly, because they cannot be available at certain times. As such, working outside normal working hours or attending to emergencies promptly may continue to remain a challenge for these women. This situation appears to be pervasive for women working in male-dominated departments or occupations where hours tend to be inflexible and workers sometimes need to work long hours and during the weekends. There were accounts of mothers working in male-dominated departments like engineering/core operations who explained that there was always a preference to have men in operations, especially when it was an offshore location, partly because of an assumption that they would have a wife at home to take care of the children. These gender stereotypes placed women in a relatively disadvantaged position.

On a positive note, supervisors and colleagues sometimes make concessions for mothers based on an understanding of their family commitments. Being the only female in her team, WM15 talked about how she was given the concession of doing the day shift while her male colleagues had to take the night shift. However, when members of a stereotyped group are judged based on a different standard of performance from other groups, it can have unfavourable consequences. In this study, the reaction from supervisors varied in their willingness to grant preferential treatment to women, especially when the demands of their job warrant working outside the normal working time. There were different narratives that suggested their companies' commitment to making concessions for



employees with family responsibilities and, while many acknowledged having accommodated whenever necessary, one of the supervisors (LM8) had a different view:

*“...If I have my way, it will prefer males and females being treated equally from day one especially for an organisation like ours that has employees from different cultures. You get the same pay. If you are on the same salary scale, why would you now give some preference to one at the expense of the other? If I could turn the hands of the clock back, that is what I'm going to do.”*

**(LM 8, Multinational Company)**

Although concessions can sometimes be viewed as preferences for mothers, they do have negative career implications. This was also supported by some narratives which focused again on certain gender stereotyping:

*“In a way, that may also hinder career progression and career moves because people are making decisions by looking at circumstances without even sometimes talking to the employee. They just say oh! Because she is a woman, she is married or she is a mother she won't be able to do this kind of work or she won't be able to go to this kind of place. I won't say career limiting but opportunity limiting at times because you can swing to the other extreme where you're trying to be accommodating but that flexibility accommodation may mean work*

*opportunity chances, promotion chances, transfer chances are passed off because people have made that decision for you.”*

**(HR 1, Multinational Company)**

Additionally, WM24 talked about how being pregnant and going for maternity leave meant not be eligible for promotion in that year. These narratives support Lewis's (1997) argument for the reluctance of women to take up some of the concessions given to women or workplace flexibility options in order not to stall their career development. It should be noted that despite efforts of management in accommodating the needs of women with family responsibilities, gender stereotyping might continue to reduce working mothers' willingness to take up these concessions.

According to Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), conflicts arise when behaviour or expectations in one role are at variance with what is expected of a person in another role. For example, for a working mother occupying a managerial position, her role as a mother involves nurturing and caring, while the traditional role of a leader requires assertiveness (Fuegen, Biernat, Haines, & Deaux, 2004). Applying the arguments of Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) to the Nigerian context, women who have been constrained by culture and traditional norms to take a subordinate role at home also take on the same role in the workplace (Ajayi et al., 2015), and if they take a senior position their authority may be challenged (Omar & Ogenyi, 2004). According to one woman:

*“It continues to dawn on me that it is actually a man’s world because men don’t have to do all these house chores. Anytime I sit down and I am depressed, I always ask myself, ‘why can’t I find time to read?’ It becomes more glaring that it is really not the same, a lot is expected of a woman. Being a working mother you can’t say because I am working there are certain things I can’t do... then you’ll have to stop the work.”*

**(WM 10, Engineer, Multinational Company)**

Like in advanced economies, there are relatively few women in management positions in Nigeria (Adebayo & Udegbe, 2004; Okpara, 2006) and these women have to actively challenge gender stereotypes. Interactions within the workplace are also shaped by the patriarchal orientation of the society (Ajayi et al., 2015). Gender stereotyping of women in higher level roles by their subordinates can also sometimes negatively affect their relationships (Adebayo & Udegbe, 2004). For example, WM 16, the Head of the Supply Chain Department in her organisation, said:

*“In the oil and gas industry especially, you don’t have a lot of women in my position. So it is a men’s world. I don’t consider myself to be a woman at heart. That is the truth because you have to be strong, you have to be able to challenge people... men, women, young or old because of the nature of the job...you are trying to convince people why they cannot go in a particular direction. Some weeks ago, I had to really challenge people that are older than me... men because I felt*

*we needed to do some negotiations...At the end of the day I am glad, because we were able save like eight thousand dollars for the company. Not that there is discrimination no..., it is just that it is not for the faint-hearted (laughs) however you can't get home and carry on with that same fierce aura. When you get home you have to unwind..., be a wife, and be a mother..."*

**(WM16, Supply chain, Indigenous Company)**

WM16's quote above provides further evidence to support how the patriarchal culture in Nigeria permeates the workplace. Another working mother also shared her experience:

*"the issue that I initially had, you know a lot of men..., I mean forget about education or elite or whatever, a lot of men still have issues reporting to a woman; the ego thing. I just made up my mind that I wasn't going to remember that they are guys (laughs), but I treat them with respect and they treat me with respect. Once or twice, somebody stepped out... in a very professional and firm way I brought them back. I have only had to issue maybe one or two queries... I usually don't have to get to that."*

**(WM 30, Contract, Multinational Company)**

As in previous studies on gender stereotyping, narratives like those above suggest the continued existence of gender prejudice in Nigerian organisations. Having few female bosses in the top management cadre, coupled with the societal paternalistic belief in Nigeria that gives men more

status and respect (Aina, 1998), means that male subordinates are likely to question the authority of female bosses (Adebayo & Udegbe, 2004). A similar finding was also reported in an earlier (western) study by Simpson (1998:45) where she argued that *“the encroachment of women into the male hierarchy can lead to heightened resistance by men as they feel their positions of power and sex right threatened”*. It is also interesting to note that when women are strict in order to retain authority they can be seen as deviant (Chovwen, 2007).

However, while women in management positions might have their authority challenged, the situation might be different for women occupying subordinate positions who count on support from their supervisors and colleagues. In this instance, gender stereotyping might work to the women’s advantage on occasion, such as the preferences given to women by colleagues and supervisors to help reduce work stress:

*“I think culturally and I have seen this in the workplace a lot in Nigeria which might be slightly different from what you might have expected. There is an expectation that women should balance their lives more, so I think there is a bit of slack that is generally cut for women to balance life. For men, it is probably a bit more difficult to balance life because the expectation is... you’ll almost get the question, ‘where is your wife or are you a woman?’”*

**(HR 1, Multinational Company)**

It should be noted, however, that despite the benefits for some women of being allowed to accommodate family responsibilities more easily than men, these preferences also have the negative effects of pigeon-holing women and reinforcing the traditional sexual division of labour.

### **5.5 Case studies: sacrifices women make for career progression**

In order to understand how WLB and WLC are experienced by working mothers in the oil and gas industry in Nigeria, the following case studies describe real life experiences of working mothers, and the challenges and conflict working mothers go through on a daily basis. These case studies present more clearly how time-based, strain-based and behaviour-based conflicts are experienced by these working mothers.

**Case 1: (WM 8, Engineer, Multinational Company)**

This case explains work-related time and strain-based conflict as job demands/responsibilities makes it challenging to fulfil some of her family responsibilities. This case study describes the conflict experienced by a working mother as she tries to cope with work and family responsibilities. Being a mother with a six month old baby who was just getting used to combining work and motherhood after her maternity leave, the transition period has been challenging for her, especially with her recent promotion, which meant greater job responsibilities, expectations and demands.

The case is presented thus:

*WM 8 is an engineer who had just been made a team lead six weeks before the interview. She returned from maternity leave two months before the interview. Her child was six months old. Upon resumption she was appraised for the months she worked in the year and she was promoted.*

*She was able to breastfeed her baby exclusively for six months by waking up by 5am to express the milk the baby will feed on for the whole day. She was however troubled because her source of support at home, her aunt, had to leave when her baby was six months old.*

*WM8's supervisor described her as a 'super-performer'. It is important to note that despite her high work performance, WM8 complains about work interference with family:*

*"...they say WLB, to be honest I have no idea what it means. You want things to be ok at home and at the same time ok at work whereby your performance at both ends are not being compromised. So I guess that is the strategy but something gives.... Because at the end of the day you spend nine to ten hours at work and you are away from your baby. When I was on maternity leave I was with my son all the time. I was at home for four months and I saw how he developed, I saw how his first tooth came out but right now I go home and something new has happened. I miss it all because I spend just three hours with him in the evening. So I don't know how balanced that really is at home... if you are aspiring to grow, something has to give.*

*I think WLB is necessary but at some point I think the skew will always tilt to one end but again they always say the early moments of a child's life that you lose you can't get back, unlike work that you always catch up with, so it is necessary but you have to see what is relevant to you. Will I be satisfied if I meet my son and I see him all the time, meanwhile progression or jobs are being taken away from me or they say I can't deliver at work? The answer is no because I want to excel in my career so I am happy to lose some of the moments with my son because I have to work. "*

### **Case 2 – (LM 1, Indigenous Company)**

The case study described below typifies a particular example of the sacrifices women make to prove that they are committed to their job and how these sacrifices can shape orientations about women in the workplace. The supervisor highlighted here had to sacrifice starting a family in order to accelerate her career growth, which describes a particular example of behaviour-based sources of conflict, i.e., that expectations from work and family spheres are different, and as such one might need to be sacrificed to achieve the other. Her perception about women shows clearly the gender stereotype that females might not be as committed as their males colleagues due to family demands. It also highlights different national contexts because this woman started her career in the UK before moving to Nigeria.

*The interviewee is a female engineer working for an indigenous Company in the oil and gas sector. She has risen to the top in her workplace by becoming the Departmental Head. She was a supervisor who had no working mothers in her team, but was nevertheless recommended by management as a good resource for this research. She narrates:*

*“I am a chemical engineer that became aware very early that it’s not a level playing field. For me to get to the level that my male colleagues aspire to get to, I needed to sacrifice a few things. It was an unspoken thing..., no one said it; but I just felt that I’ll need to sacrifice. I started my career at ABC and my training was very rigorous. I also did a Ph.D. I started my career at twenty-six, which is relatively late in the UK and it’s a rigorous training which requires a lot of fieldwork... and not only was I not at the age where I felt I was flexible.*

*Relatively old to be doing a fieldwork so I also felt a bit uncomfortable but I was also aware that if I didn’t excel at my training, it will limit the progression I was likely to meet later on in my career. So even when I wanted to get married, I didn’t. I was conscious of the fact that there are limited opportunities for women.*

*I did a lot of offshore work, and at a time... I am talking about year 2002, at the time the feel was... if you complain or if you say I can’t go offshore or I cannot go to the rig or I need to go I have a tummy ache..., they will say, ‘you know what, keep this woman and give us a guy’. It happened a lot, and if you messed up as a woman... because I was in cementing... there was a line called cementing, which is cementing of offshore wells. If you made a mistake and you cemented your equipment which happens a lot..., if you have miscalculated..., the feeling was it was because it is a woman as opposed to the fact that it could happen to anybody.*



*We did far and beyond what were required of us as women... just to show and to prove that we can do it just as well as the men could. So I'll go offshore for two weeks and I am meant to take two weeks off but they will call me in three days later and say that there is another opportunity for you and you will jump at it because you are thinking most rigs do not want women and if I say I can't, they will say it's because she is a girl.*

*So we did a little bit more than was necessary. Also, in the UK, working in the North Sea... I was sharing a room with a guy because if you were complaining... because each room had either two or four beds. If you say, 'I need to be on my own' then it means you have taken up a room that could ordinarily house four men and they didn't like that. So they will say, 'can you share?' In fact, they don't even ask you. You'll be the one to volunteer that I can share with the guys just because you don't want to miss out on the opportunity. That was how I started my career with the mind-set that it's the man's world in my field and I really need to prove myself and I need to work twice as hard to get to where I want to be. Subconsciously as well, I think I sacrificed some things that ordinarily a Nigerian woman at that age wouldn't be expected to do; get married, have children and all that... I sacrificed it.*

*Today, what is my take on it? Because of my training, that is another thing... when you look at it..., women in the workplace all have varied mentality or varied opinions on how things should be. Because of my training, I have an expectation of the women that work with me. I don't know if it is a good thing or a bad thing... but more importantly, I am one of those people... and I am saying it honestly to you that I am apprehensive about working with women because I feel that we do have a demand. Today it is accepted that you would say, 'I need this time off' ...may be it is school holiday so I need time off to be with my children which is a good thing but I feel that subconsciously you have to earn it. You can't do that at the beginning of your career. Why should you be the only one that takes time off every summer and every Christmas... you know..., in my mind you haven't worked out a plan that gets you to the position where you are able to take time off. If you have proved yourself and you have earned your stripes then when you say you are taking summer off everybody says, 'go for it, you have earned your stripes'.*

*I think my training contributed to the mind-set I have and it is the same with the guys but as I said, I am apprehensive when I'm interviewing a lady. I am looking for that five percent that is not thinking that once I get the job..., in nine months I will have a baby. I am looking for somebody that is slightly different to that because I know the demands of the work we do in the oil and gas industry."*

The experience of the female manager above typifies the 'ideal worker' orientation discussed by some scholars where working full-time and putting in extra hours and efforts represents the ideal situation (Lewis, 1997). Relating this to the Nigerian environment where women are expected to get married and have children (Aryee, 2005), LM1 had actually sacrificed a lot and acted more like a man in her work role to prove herself. Like the arguments proposed by some researchers who have explored women working in male-dominated occupations like engineering or women leaders/managers (Adebayo & Udegbe, 2004; Heilman, 2001), she struggled to cope with gender stereotyping as she went about her daily tasks at work.

## **5.6 Institutional Roles in Work-Family Conflict**

Within the Nigerian context, the work-family conflict experienced by workers represents an accumulation of conflicts from all the other dramatis personae: government, organisations (with specific parts played by the HR practitioners who make the policies and the supervisors who implement them) and unions. This supports findings from the study conducted by Akanji (2013) who investigated the cultural perceptions and knowledge of work-life balance among employees in the Nigerian service industry. This argument is also supported by some working mothers interviewed by the researcher, with particular narratives around societal patriarchal beliefs:

*“In our culture, a lot of people believe the man is the man and the woman should be the one that will take care of the house, do the cleaning, do the washing you know..., the stereotype that the fact that the society believes that there are some things a man should do and some things the woman should do. Sometimes, most families are structured in that way that they forget that it is also good to ask myself... how the other party is doing whether it is the man or the woman you know... to be able to assist. We should try to also understand that we are all human beings and sometimes we would need help, we just don't leave it to the fact that it is your role... stick with it. I think if we still go by the stereotype, it is going to be a problem especially now that most women are working. I doubt... it is a few now... unlike in the days of our parents and grandparents when the women were mostly at home but now most women are working, it doesn't help when that stereotype is still in place.”*

**(WM19, Engineer, Multinational Company)**

Institutional roles in the next sections will be focused upon discussion of the role of the government, organisation, HR practitioners, supervisors and employee representatives in work-family conflict.

### **5.6.1 The role of Government**

The failure on the part of government as an institution which should provide support for its citizens is an additional source of conflict for workers and serves as an impediment to the effective functioning of different forms of work flexibility. The inadequacy of infrastructural facilities (e.g., the absence of a stable power supply, good roads, reliable security system and an efficient transportation system) all have the potential to create strain for

Nigerian workers, and associated psychological stress, fatigue, irritability and health-related problems are recurring themes in previous research from Nigeria (Epie, 2004; 2010; 2011; Fajana, 2005; Mordi et al. 2013). The major mode of transportation is by road and previous researchers in Nigeria have found that the very poor state of the roads hampers the efficient movement of people. As a result, a lot of potentially productive hours are spent travelling to and from work (Akanji, 2013; Epie, 2011; Epie & Ituma, 2014; Mordi et al., 2013). In the present research, a woman working in a multinational company discussed the traffic problems encountered on a daily basis travelling from home to the workplace :

*“...I have worked abroad and I could drive home but here... imagine, you can’t even say you want to drive home even if your house is two kilometres from the office. There is a horrible traffic because the road systems don’t work well; there is too much traffic. I have an hour break..., it would have been good to be able to drive home, check what is happening at home and spend some time with your baby but you can’t.”*

**(WM 7, HR practitioner, Multinational Company)**

In addition to this, the unstable and unreliable electricity supply means that planning activities at home (ironing, hoovering and even cooking) can be frustrating and people have to provide themselves with alternative power sources such as generators and inverters (Adenikinju, 2005, Iwayemi, 2008). Another problem is the performance of basic functions using crude instruments rather than electronic substitutes which are used by women in developed economies, e.g., fetching water instead of turning on a tap to

access running water (Asiyanbola, 2005). One particular activity often mentioned by working mothers in this study was having to boil water for bathing, while a more effective approach would be to use water heaters installed in the bathroom. This takes up time that could have been invested in other activities.

It is also important to note that, as in the USA, public-funded healthcare in Nigeria is limited, unlike the tax-funded healthcare system which operates in the United Kingdom and in some other EU countries (Lyonette, Kaufman & Crompton, 2011; Gregory & Milner, 2009). Working mothers therefore mostly rely on the healthcare insurance schemes provided by their employers.

Researchers have also pointed to how the Nigerian Labour Act is outdated and weak (Epie & Ituma, 2014; Mordi et al., 2013), with the penalty for non-compliance being low (Frynas, 2001). For example, the penalty for contravening a provision, such as paying wages in lieu of holidays, carries a penalty not exceeding eight hundred naira (equivalent to three pounds). The Nigerian Labour Act was last amended in 1990 and has not kept pace with the present realities faced by working families, especially those in professional or technical services. The Labour Act covers four types of workers: manual and clerical staff, employees with written contracts of employment, public servants whose employment is provided in a statute and public servants in the civil service (Nigeria Labour Act, 1990). The provisions in respect of the employment of women relate only to women in

agricultural and mining sectors, as well as women employed on night work.<sup>9</sup> Nigeria has also ratified a number of ILO conventions (Ishola., 2013) but implementation remains a challenge due to *“capacity challenges in ensuring compliance with such commitments and the lack of adequate awareness of the provisions of such conventions”* (ILO, 2011).

A general finding from this study and previous research in Nigeria (Akanji, 2013; Mordi et al., 2013) is that people believe that there is unwillingness on the part of government to amend the Labour Laws or to provide the necessary basic amenities to make life easier for Nigerians to achieve work-life balance:

*“Question: As an HR person, what do you think are the impediments to work -life balance in Nigeria because in advanced countries, it is a normal thing but here, it is actually hard for us to get into it?”*

*Answer: I think the first major impediment is that our labour law is not very strong. You contract that you are going to do 8 to 5 or 9 to 6 and people are expected to work longer hours...”*

**(HR practitioner 2, Pilot Study, Conglomerate)**

### **5.6.2 The role of organisations**

At the organisational level, some companies recognise that in order to attract, motivate and retain a productive workforce, especially under-tapped female talent, family-friendly policies must be put in place (Batt & Valcour,

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<sup>9</sup> See [www.ilo.org/dyn/travail/docs/914/Labour%20Act.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/travail/docs/914/Labour%20Act.pdf)

2003; Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Deery, 2008; Earle, 2003). In their study in Hong Kong, Aryee et al. (1998) found that employed parents who benefit from family-friendly policies are more attached to their organisations because such policies help in reducing WLC. Other studies in Western countries have also provided evidence of a positive relationship between the availability of family-friendly policies and job satisfaction and productivity (Aryee et al., 1998; Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Fulmer, Gerhart & Scott, 2003). The main challenge for workers in Nigeria generally has been the rigidity around working hours. Part-time work is rarely available and the majority of jobs usually involve working from 8am - 5.30pm (Epie, 2005; Epie & Ituma, 2014). This has affected the decision for working mothers about working in the formal and informal sector due to the challenges of negotiating between family and work (Fapohunda, 2012). The informal sector is generally more accommodating because it allows some flexibility, unlike the formal sector, as highlighted by one working mother in the study described here:

*“We have a fixed rigid structure of working; you come to work by seven, you close by four, you come to work by eight, you close by five. Your working hours are fixed- from this time to this time. The way things happen at home, they cannot happen outside that time. If you have more flexible working hours... something flexible. But the way things happen at home, they cannot happen outside that time...so anything that is happening in your family should happen outside those hours. There should be some flexibility...maybe today you might need to start working from 10am...”*

**(WM20, Engineer, Multinational Company)**

On the other hand, some of the family-friendly initiatives available for staff in Nigeria include (limited) flexitime, telecommuting, career breaks and maternity leave, amongst others. Due to the poor provision for workers within the Labour Act (1990), companies operating in Nigeria tend to provide support beyond the minimum stipulated by the law, especially companies within the oil and gas sector where the major players are multinationals. For example, two rest days per week are the norm compared to one day specified in the Labour Act. Pregnant women are also allowed to go on three months maternity leave and, in most cases, medical costs are funded through corporate health insurance schemes. Upon resumption from maternity leave, mothers are allowed to finish work an hour earlier or start work an hour later for three months. Some companies also allow mothers to take their annual leave in addition to their maternity leave within the same year (Epie & Ituma, 2014). Companies also allow some time off for study leave. In recognition of the communalist culture of Nigeria, workers are allowed some days off for compassionate (bereavement) leave and at times there is a policy in place for a lump sum payment for marriage expenses or to the bereaved for burial expenses. In order to meet global standards in support of workers' well-being, companies also pay for and encourage their staff to join sport clubs in order to stay fit.

To cover some of the rapid deterioration in welfare services provided by the state, employers in the oil and gas sector tend to go even further by providing incentives to support their employees and increase productivity.



These incentives include “*generous car loans, transport allowance or free fuel, free and heavily subsidised accommodation*” (Ovadjie & Ankomah, 2001:180). In the present study, an HR practitioner discussed specific policies put in place because of the peculiar nature of the Nigerian environment:

*“... I'll say in today's world they are monetary. If I go back a couple of years, to a place like Abbata, we actually have our own hospital, we have our own clubs and we have our own residential areas. So, effectively we ran a parallel state...”*

**(HR1, Multinational Company)**

For some of the multinational companies included in the study, there was a standardisation of policies across each of the subsidiaries. Evidence has previously been provided which shows that companies with more women are likely to have more family-friendly programmes and larger organisations might be more willing to institute more family-friendly programmes due to their access to more working capital (Poelmans, Chinchilla & Cardona, 2003). Policies in smaller-sized companies are likely to be more informal and handled on a case-by-case basis (Yasbek, 2004). Although the indigenous companies within the oil and gas sector in Nigeria tend to have fewer family-friendly policies than the multinationals, there is evidence to suggest that they are also trying to improve their policies:

*“We are marginal field operators, so in terms of financial power play we are not that buoyant. So we cannot say we would uphold all the standard practices..., not that we would shy away from them... we would do them but we would not have the size to support certain*

*practices. For instance, as far as my office is concerned we are just two working mothers in a population of a hundred and something staff. So in such cases you are a bit challenged because for our operation office, the working mother there, the only one with a toddler is just one person. So if you are going to build a crèche it might not be worth the while. Secondly she prefers to keep her child with her mum in Port-Harcourt and come to Eket to work. So those are the things that will influence our decisions. One,... ours is a marginal field so in terms of cash flow we are not in the same league with the bigger companies...*

*In an owner-driven environment..., they are the kind of people that are not excited about recruiting women because they don't want to get those excuses so you must show a lot of commitment. It is easy to sit down and say I am a working mother and I think the employer should put a crèche, should let me close early, should do this and that, have you thought about the bottom life of the organisation, if it were your company would you take that?"*

**(HR2, Indigenous Company)**

Another HR Practitioner in an indigenous company, HR4, also said that most of the practices to help accommodate the needs of working mothers are informal and as such are not written down; issues are treated on a one-on-one basis. HR4 further commented:

*"...we have seen an instance where at that very senior level, a personnel was invited along with the family because the wife actually wrote a petition on the effect of the job on the husband and they were called and the result..., based on the communiqué and some understanding, it was resolved that for that particular period the person should be given some time whereby the working hour got reduced. This is what I would call a non-reference approval just for the person*

*to resolve at home and the effect was actually seen and meaningful too.*

*It would have been so encouraging if these are documented. They would have been so comprehensive as well but since we usually do what is called “treat issues as they come”. It is not a bad idea at all because in some cases you might just see yourself encouraging something that cannot actually support the business operations of the company and at the end you will see that people are equally taking advantage of what you call policies too. So because they are not there does not mean we are not taking serious cognisance of it.”*

**(HR4, Indigenous Company)**

However, other researchers have argued that the implementation of work/family life programmes is one of the greatest challenges of HRM professionals in Nigeria, especially if these programmes cannot be linked with profitability (Okpara & Wynn, 2007; Ovadje & Ankomah, 2001).

Examining the work life programmes available in different subsidiaries of a particular multinational across locations, it was discovered that some programmes are available in other locations, such as part-time working, while its appropriateness in Nigeria is still being considered. It was also interesting to discover that some work-life initiatives are operational only in Nigeria due to its peculiar social infrastructure deficit. For example, HR1, a practitioner working in a multinational company discussed the shift by the company to monetise benefits since these are now available as off-the-shelf services, unlike some years previously:

*“I think in the last few years, we have seen a lot of things, many more things are now..., I’ll say more readily available to buy off the market, so we tended to move away from providing some of these benefits in kind to providing monetary incentives to employees. What you will find is if you look at our pay structure compared to maybe like a developed country..., in most developed countries, they just have like a basic pay. Here, we have a basic pay and we have an allowance for everything else. So we have an allowance for cars, we have an allowance for generators, we have an allowance for housing, we have an allowance for fuel, for diesel. So we have all kinds of monetary allowances... As I said, we are also buying Health Management Insurance from an HMO, so increasingly there are many more things that are..., even though they are not state provided, they are being provided by specialist private sources. So our policy in recent times have been a move more towards some sort of monetisation policy and more of a cash compensation structure by allowing the employees the flexibility to choose what they want to purchase with the money in their hands. Like I said, you can choose to rent a house closer and buy a smaller car or you can choose to rent a house further down and buy a bigger car (laughs)”*

**(HR1, Multinational Company)**

This finding about the context-specific nature of benefits resonates with Aryee’s (2005) argument about the danger of importing WLB practices from advanced economies to sub-Saharan Africa. In spite of the various provisions offered by organisations, women are sometimes unwilling to take them up because of the desire for career advancement and some evidence from western research has also shown that this can have detrimental impacts. (Lewis, 1997; Rogier & Padgett, 2004; Schwartz, 1996).

Another challenge that is peculiar to Nigeria which has affected family and work is the community unrest in the Niger Delta, the South-South Zone of Nigeria. Despite the fact that the region contains a wealth of crude oil, the main revenue generator of the Federal government of Nigeria, there is little development within the region to show for this. This has resulted in community unrest for some time because residents and rebels have been agitated by the degradation of their land, water and their environment, due to oil spillage, without a corresponding development in amenities (Fajana, 2005). Attacks are characterised by violence, kidnapping and killing. This turn of events has affected the way employees handle family issues, especially for companies that have branches in the states affected by the violence. For example, although the outsourcing of domestic and childcare support is common in Nigeria, attacks by militants have reduced the trust afforded to strangers. As such, people preferred to run some errands on their own.

In understanding difficulties encountered by supervisors in managing people with family responsibilities, HR1 discussed how the company started taking a second look at how to flex time for employees when security challenges in Nigeria escalated and more employees, especially mothers, were preferring to take their children to school, pick them up, things which has previously been done by maids or relatives. The role of the HR practitioners and supervisors as representatives of management will be discussed in subsequent sections.

### **5.6.3 The role of HR practitioners**

HR practitioners play a strategic role in achieving the objective of ensuring the workplace is supportive of the needs of women with family responsibilities, especially with the talent shortage envisaged by McKinsey and Company (Batt & Valcour, 2003). According to this data, by 2018 the United States faces a shortage of 140,000 to 190,000 people with analytical expertise and 1.5 million managers.<sup>10</sup> With evidence of work-family conflict high among parents and over two-thirds of US families being dual earner families, the role of HR executives in introducing family-friendly policies is important in recruiting and retaining talent (Batt & Valcour, 2003:190). In a study which examined why companies differ in the way they embrace work-life balance, Milliken and colleagues (1998) discovered that the extent to which human resource executives sell WLB programmes to management depends on a number of factors. Some of these factors are: the extent to which they believe it affects the productivity of the organisation's workforce; the percentage of workers who are women; and the presence of organisational procedures for gathering information about employees. If the majority of senior managers embrace the traditional male breadwinner family system, there is less likelihood that the organisation will encourage family-friendly policies.

Although empirical studies have provided evidence that family-friendly policies benefit both employees and employers (Brough et al., 2008; Chimote & Srivastava, 2013; Galea, Houkes & De Rijk, 2013), budget

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<sup>10</sup> [http://www.mckinsey.com/Features/Big\\_Data](http://www.mckinsey.com/Features/Big_Data)

restrictions have meant that getting the support of management to institute work-life programmes has become one of the greatest challenges for human resource practitioners (Batt & Valcour, 2003; Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Ovadje & Ankomah, 2001:190).

All HR practitioners interviewed attested to the fact that time spent with family is being prioritised, going on leave is also being emphasised, but the practice of monetising leave periods has been stopped. HR departments also organise health talks/programmes regularly to educate employees about AIDS/HIV, cancer, high blood pressure and other health-related conditions. There was also training for supervisors to manage diversity and the “diversity and inclusion” concept was mentioned by most HR practitioners at some point during the interviews. In addition, one of the multinational companies has introduced an annual employee survey which HR believes will act as a channel for employees to communicate their views about the company and its policies.

Family-friendly policies can be beneficial in helping working mothers have control over their time, but they may not eliminate working long hours if there is no reduction in employees’ workload and deliverables (Batt and Valcour, 2003). It is therefore important to ensure work flexibility does not simply mean working more hours at home or elsewhere, thereby further blurring the boundary between work and family and doing little to resolve the tensions resulting from WLC. Despite senior management within the oil and gas industry in Nigeria appearing to be increasingly focused on various family-friendly initiatives, such as closing early, planning for vacation and

encouraging and implementing different work-life policies, reports from most working mothers show that they continue to work beyond their closing time. For example, WM 16 narrated how she finishes work at 5:30pm and she continues to attend to work queries thereafter while her driver takes her home. Even for those who do leave early, laptops and mobile phones still ensure that they are working when they are not physically present in the office, thus blurring the boundaries of work and family.

#### **5.6.4 The role of Supervisors**

In addition to the traditional role of supervisors in the line management of staff, they have also been increasingly charged with other management responsibilities which include appraisal, training and employee engagement. While HR practitioners are responsible for making policies to guide employees, the responsibility for their implementation rests primarily with the supervisor (Child & Partridge, 1982; Cunningham & Hyman, 1995; Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007). This therefore implies that for policies to achieve the objective for which they were set, the support of supervisors is paramount. Although researchers have acknowledged a positive relationship between the availability of family-friendly policies and work-life balance (Beauregard & Henry, 2009), other studies have also identified a strong relationship between employee perceptions of informal work-family support from the organisation and a reduction in work-life conflict (Allen, 2001; Behson, 2005; Ovadjie & Ankomah, 2001). One of the HR practitioners interviewed for this study reported that supervisors tend to be



people who have been working in the organisation for a long time and are therefore used to the traditional full-time working schedule. On the other hand, global organisations are increasingly seeing the benefit of enhancing their IT systems and reducing their office space, leading to more virtual team-working:

*“...I know we still have a lot of line managers who are people who belong to the old school belief that if I don’t see my team/staff, then they are not working. But like I said, that is even changing because some of the structures the company has put in place has a lot of virtual teams now. So, increasingly your boss doesn’t see you anyway.”*

**(HR 1, Multinational Company)**

Although this growing trend was only mentioned by one HR manager in the research described here, the emergence of more virtual teams is likely in the future in Nigeria, especially in multinational companies.

It is important to point out that the supervisors interviewed in this study recognised that employees with children have additional responsibilities which can result in emergencies and are usually unplanned:

*“...there are challenges but not critical ones... Like if a child is sick, the mother will be off and sometimes it may be a serious medical condition which may require the mother to be there and as you know these things are usually unplanned. If it were a holiday, holidays can be planned and vacation can be planned...those are the kind of cases we have had but when it is a medical issue, you might not even be able to say precisely for how long the person might be away. Maybe pregnancy... but with that also you have no time to plan (laughs).*

*The worst I have had to deal with is in respect of one of my staff who was pregnant. Unfortunately, the pregnancy was a difficult one. She had to be away for about a year and that is an unusual situation..., if it were an average performer maybe you wouldn't feel it so much... she is somebody who is also very good. Obviously, we didn't know it was going to be for a year at the onset... we thought she was coming back, then you have to wait months... but we managed, we coped somehow. Some people had to delay leave or cancel leave plans..."*

**(Female Supervisor, Finance Department, Multinational Company)**

Supervisors can be absolved from some of the blame for the slow take-up of more flexible working alternatives for staff. This is due to the cultural belief in Nigeria that *"you should be your brother's keeper"* (Ovadjie & Ankomah, 2001:186). According to Ovadjie and Ankomah (2001:186), *"giving negative feedback, in fact any face-to-face appraisal, is difficult for managers and it is considered an attempt to ruin someone else's career"*. Interviews with supervisors in Nigeria by the researcher showed the dilemma they were facing in drawing a line between allowing some flexibility for people with family responsibilities and calling them to order when they are perceived to be taking advantage of the situation. One supervisor from a multinational company stated:

*"It is always difficult to draw the line, if the situation is not properly managed and there are deadlines... they may want to take advantage of the situation. However where there is an agreement, it is easier to notice when someone is falling off the line. Not too much and not too little otherwise this could send wrong signals to other team members."*

**(Supervisor 6, multinational company)**

Another supervisor said:

*“One of my colleagues... working with me had her baby abroad and when it was time to come, the baby’s paper-work... social security number in the U.S. did not arrive and she needed to be back here because we had a programme to do. You know, she kept sending me mails and I kept sending her back. She couldn’t come because of the social security number because she was waiting on that but senior management were beginning to complain and saying, “How are you going to do it? Are you going to do this all by yourself? I mean we need this person” in this unit, and everything. We tried to manage it as best as we could but after a while you know, I had to tell the person that you are going to have to come back to work because it is now beyond us! I understand: you want your baby, you’ve had your baby, and you need all the papers and everything but it’s going to be sent in the post anyway. So come back if you want to keep this job. I’m not threatening you, but you know, you’ve now done your 4 months. I’ve given you an extra two weeks. I really cannot cover you anymore. It’s totally beyond me.”*

**(Supervisor 5, multinational company)**

Despite the challenges supervisors seem to be facing when dealing with people with family responsibilities, they acknowledge that one of the impediments to the effective functioning of work-life balance in Nigeria is the lack of attention paid to various forms of flexible working, especially for the working mother:

*“In Nigeria, one of the areas I think we have not really explored for women is part-time work, flexible time, more time off when your children are young but leaving the option open for you to return to work... say a year or two out. These are the areas I think personally we can explore which we have not done.*

*I have a sister.... like two or three weeks ago, there were issues on the route to Apapa..., Apapa hold-up has gone to another level. She lives in Apapa and works in Ikeja. It was taking her like four hours to get to work in the morning and four, five or six hours to get home in the evening. She has young children... she has a boy and a girl... I think like age six and eight...you can imagine. What happened was that one day she got home and her husband was like, ‘that’s it! Tomorrow when you get to the office, you are going to apply to go on part-time... become a part-time worker... I think he had had enough..., I mean...he is not the type that usually talks about such things.... She did that exactly and she was granted that wish amazingly although they told her that well, we are allowing you for three months. I am sure they are hoping that she is going to get tired of it and she will go back to full time... I think they have another thing coming because I don’t think she is going to change her mind. But why does it have to be the woman that is proposing... I mean... this should have been part of the company policy/procedure. We should have that option.”*

**(Supervisor 6, Female, Multinational company)**

Of course, some supervisors are mothers themselves and suffer from WLC like other working mothers. In analysing the conflict experienced by middle supervisors in the Nigerian banking industry, Mordi and colleagues (2013) argued that senior management encouraged the culture of working long hours and discouraged workers from going on leave, getting married and

using flexible working options. In order to keep their jobs, some working mothers resorted to underhand and increasingly desperate practices such as denying being married or even falsifying the birth certificates of their children (Mordi et al., 2013). Unlike the banks, however, practices of this nature do not appear to exist in the oil and gas sector and this was confirmed by all the working mothers interviewed for this study.

#### **5.6.5 The role of trade unions**

Another source of support for employees within the oil and gas sector is their Union. The Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (PENGASSAN) organises senior staff employees in the oil and gas sector while the Nigeria Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas workers (NUPENG) organises the junior workers within this sector. Before 2005, union membership within the oil sector in Nigeria was automatic for new employees unless there was an express refusal. This right was granted by the government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to strengthen union membership. However, this policy was changed in 2005 due to government concerns about the power of the unions (Fajana, 2005).

An interview conducted for this study with the Public Relations Officer of one of the unions, however, suggests that they tend to focus their efforts on the “bread and butter issues”, issues relating to the determination of wages and salary increments, as well as fighting against casualisation. In addition, unions have been involved over many years in fighting against those companies who unilaterally try to change conditions of work or retrench their

workers; where such decisions have to be made, this has to be discussed with unions and they have ensured that large severance benefits are paid by the companies to their employees (Ovadjie & Ankomah, 2001:182; Fajana,2005). As a result, the unions have spent less time on other issues than unions in developed economies. HR1 corroborated this evidence from the literature and further said that issues related to work-life issues are usually driven by management. Issues related to different forms of work flexibility or work-life balance may not be ripe for discussion and representation at present.

## **5.7 Summary**

This chapter gives outlines the daily activities of working mothers at work, taking into consideration the sacrifices made in reconciling work and family and the influence of gender stereotyping. Women all over the world are still usually the primary carers and bear the main responsibility for domestic work. The extent to which individuals have moved on the continuum between patriarchy and egalitarian beliefs has varied, based on individual orientation and cultural beliefs. Institutions such as government, organisations, HR practitioners, supervisors and unions, do have a role to play in cushioning the conflict experienced by working families. For example, the availability and efficiency of basic infrastructural amenities, a strong industrial relations system and more involvement in the employment relationship can help working parents manage their home and work spheres better. Researchers have extensively discussed the major role which can

be played by organisations in supporting working families and other employees who have different interests outside of work. This support usually involves the introduction of family friendly policies and workplace flexibility options. It is important to note that the level of involvement of organisations varies across national contexts and is determined in part by the extent of government support to working families, as well as the level of priority that it places on organisations having family-friendly policies (Den Dulk et al., 2013).

The organisation, HR practitioners and supervisors all have a role to play in ensuring a supportive working culture that will encourage working mothers to embrace flexible working options and other work-life programmes (Aryee et al., 1998; Lewis, 1997). The unions as employees' representatives should also be visible in helping secure a better working environment that recognises the needs of working families; however, the reality of having to negotiate salaries and other conditions of employment has meant that this has not yet happened in the oil and gas sector in Nigeria.

As in other parts of the world, families in Nigeria are going through a period in which more women are entering full-time employment. In an environment where full-time work schedules are the norm, negotiating between work and family can be challenging and may lead to conflict. Although researchers have varied in their arguments about factors causing or aggravating WLC, the debates have been generally useful in understanding the level of WLC experienced by working couples; for example, the age and number of children within the family (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985), if the two partners

are career-oriented (Beutell & Greenhaus, 1982) and the level of support given by various institutions (Agarwala et al., 2014; Annor, 2014; Okonkwo, 2014). The sources of conflict model: time-based, strain-based and behaviour-based, developed by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) was also helpful in understanding the sources of WLC experienced by workers, especially working mothers in the oil and gas industry in Nigeria. This has been the purpose of the chapter. This, however, does not imply that other factors outside of the work and family spheres cannot affect levels of WLC experienced by working mothers.

It is interesting to note that there are similarities and differences in the WLC experienced by working mothers in developed and developing economies. There is a consensus among scholars that parents experience more work-life conflict than non-parents and couples with children experience more WLC than couples without children, and that the environment also plays a role in increasing or reducing WLC (Mordi et al., 2013). For example, in some European countries, the provision of crèches, basic infrastructural amenities, government provided day-care, flexible working options and generous parental leave have aided the reduction in WLC for working families, while the availability of social support from relatives within the African context has reduced substantially the extent of family-related conflict experienced by families. On the other hand, working women in Nigeria have experienced work-related conflict as a result of inadequate infrastructural facilities, the dated nature of the Nigerian Labour Law and a lack of



workplace flexibility options, which places extra burden on these working mothers.

In conclusion, this chapter provided evidence of the existence of the three sources of conflict within the Nigerian environment. Narratives from working mothers were skewed towards work-related conflicts while family-related time-based conflict and strain-based conflicts were reported in isolated cases.

It is important to investigate the coping strategies of working mothers in Nigeria who have made the difficult decision to seek paid employment outside the home in a relatively inflexible working environment. Coping strategies of working mothers will be discussed in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 6: THE COPING STRATEGIES OF WORKING MOTHERS**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The last chapter discussed the conflict experienced by working mothers in Nigeria in navigating between two different but interconnected spheres: the home and the workplace. Although viewed differently, they have been found to have permeable boundaries (Clark, 2000). With increasing pressure on working mothers to balance work and family responsibilities, the need to devise coping strategies has been identified by researchers (Akanji, 2013; Beutell & Greenhaus, 1983; Okafor & Amayo, 2006; Rotondo & Kincaid, 2008). Coping strategies could be developed with the support provided by various institutions, such as the government introducing legislation and child support allowances (Fagan et al., 2012), by organisations introducing family-friendly policies (Aryee et al., 1998; Lewis, 1997) by family members helping mothers, or by mothers devising their own personal strategies (Akanji, 2013; Beutell & Greenhaus, 1983; Rotondo & Kincaid, 2008).

Working can mean different things, depending on national contexts. Unlike their peers in advanced economies benefitting from the one-and-a-half earner model where part-time working could be an option, for the Nigerian woman being employed generally means working full-time. As a result, women have to devise various strategies through thoughts and actions to enable them to arrive at what they believe is a balance between the work and family domains which are competing for their limited resources and time

(Rotondo & Kincaid, 2008). Most literature on work and family in Africa has concentrated on the individual coping strategies of workers due to limited government support (Akanji, 2012) and, as such, support for work-life balance is more individualised (Waterhouse, 2013), rather than seen as a state responsibility, as is prevalent in Scandinavian countries (Lyonette et al., 2007).

Coping strategies have emerged as a major theme during the data analysis undertaken as part of this research. The strategies used by Nigerian women in balancing home and work responsibilities can be broadly categorised into three, each meant to tackle one or more of the three sources of conflict identified by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985): time-based, strain-based and behaviour based. The sources of conflict model developed by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) has been discussed extensively in Chapter Two so this chapter will only draw inferences based on the findings. This chapter presents findings from the data analysis and relates these findings to previous research on parents' coping strategies.

## 6.2 Coding

Codes generated during data analysis are presented in the table below:

**Table 6.1: Thematic codes for working mothers' coping strategies**

Sources of conflict	Coping strategy
<b>Time-based</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prioritisation of domestic tasks</li><li>• Planning of household activities</li><li>• Living close to the workplace</li><li>• Drawing on supervisors'/colleagues' support</li><li>• External sources of help<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Spouse and family</li><li>▪ Domestic helps and day-care centres</li></ul></li></ul>
<b>Strain-based</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Spirituality in the workplace</li><li>• Relational management</li><li>• Emotional management</li></ul>
<b>Behaviour-based</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Skills transfer</li><li>• Embrace of professional values</li><li>• Availability of female mentors</li></ul>

These codes will be discussed extensively in the following sections.

## 6.3 Time-Based Conflict

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) argued that conflict could arise when multiple roles compete for an individual's time. Since time is a limited resource, time used in an activity in one role cannot be devoted to activities in another role. This source of conflict which has previously been reported in Nigerian workplaces (Akanji, 2012; Epie & Ituma, 2014; Mordi et al., 2013) was

attributed to long working hours and commuting hours, as well as schedule incompatibility.

Findings from this study suggest that mothers endeavour to cope with work and family demands by devising personal strategies for dealing with conflicts encountered in the work and family domains, as well as drawing on the support of supervisors and colleagues. These strategies are hereby discussed.

### **6.3.1 Living close to their workplaces and/or leaving home early**

In order to cope with work-related sources of conflict, working mothers talked about striving to finish work at the official closing time and working beyond this time was usually restricted to specific period(s) when there was an increase in workload or deliverables. There were various examples by working mothers that suggested they usually left home early in order to beat the traffic situation prevalent in Nigeria, especially during workers' commuting times, e.g., in the mornings and at close of work, some of the mothers also talked about leaving work at the official closing time in order to beat the evening traffic. Narratives from working mothers suggest they sometimes have to work beyond the normal closing hours. However, most mothers tried as much as possible not to stay beyond the normal closing time or work weekends.

Where family finances allowed, and if property prices were affordable, mothers might seek to reside closer to their workplaces in order to reduce

commuting time and the amount of time spent in traffic. For example, one mother commented:

*"I used to live a bit further down... I had to consider the traffic so I moved a bit closer just to be sure that if I leave the house at 7:35am I can still get to the office by eight"*

**(WM 15, Geology, Multinational Company)**

To ensure that family commitments did not interfere with work schedules, mothers had to re-adjust the timing of some of their activities at home (Odunaike, 2012). For example, one working mother narrated:

*"I wake up on average at about... between 4:30am to 5:00am every day and part of the reason is because I have to get myself ready and get my baby who is six months old ready. I wake him up around 5:30am and... by 6:30am I leave the house."*

**(WM 7, HR, Multinational Company)**

Also, there were various examples by working mothers that suggested they usually left home early in order to beat the heavy traffic prevalent in Nigeria, especially during commuting times, and some of the mothers also talked about leaving work at the official closing time in order to beat the evening traffic.

Narratives from working mothers suggest they sometimes have to work beyond the normal closing hours. However, most mothers tried as much as possible not to stay beyond the normal closing time or work weekends.

### **6.3.2 Planning of household and personal activities**

Analysis of the household chores of working mothers demonstrated that working mothers did a lot of planning on how housework, childcare and other personal tasks were handled; the timing and the frequency of such tasks were changed depending on their practicality. Major cleaning was done during the weekend while minor household chores such as making the bed and keeping the bedrooms tidy were done during weekdays. For example, a working mother commented:

*“I try to make a nice breakfast on Saturdays because during the week nobody has the time, everybody is going to work.”*

**(WM 14, Facility, Multinational Company)**

Working mothers sometimes had to forego weekend beauty routines such as fixing their nails or going to the hair salon every weekend. A working mother (WM10) described how she was able to save the time spent doing her hair by buying different designs of wigs which she wore to work to make her look good. This time-saving technique also sometimes involved rearranging the routines of other household members:

*“Sometimes I have actually had to tell my children’s teachers, ‘please give them homework we can finish within thirty minutes to one hour’, not that they should go and research something... already I am tired and you want to make me go on the internet and start researching things...”*

**(WM 15, Geologist, Multinational Company)**

This finding was also reported in Ghana, where mothers talked about the prioritisation of tasks, giving preference to childcare over the working mothers' personal needs (Waterhouse, 2013). Apart from Waterhouse's (2013) study, the re-arrangement of household tasks has rarely been discussed in the literature on coping strategies of working mothers in Africa as a whole. Further analysis also shows that apart from the prioritisation of what needed to be done within the home, attention was also given to the person doing these tasks. This will be discussed next.

### **6.3.3 Prioritisation of domestic tasks by classifying chores into core and peripheral tasks**

Analysis of the household routine also revealed that working mothers tend to adopt a strategy used by organisations: concentrating on a few activities that are critical to business operations while outsourcing those which are mundane and routine. This was what Gulati and Kletter (2009:60) termed "*shrinking core, expanding periphery*". In the research here, mothers also understood their core tasks, for which they maximised their efficiency, while they outsourced other tasks which they perceived as requiring less of their personal attention. For example, WM4 cleaned her room that is shared with her husband personally. She also did all the cooking whereas her help handled chores related to house cleaning and childcare. Evidence from the interviews suggests that the working mothers handled activities that were beneficial to their husband personally, for example, cooking or tidying their bedrooms, thereby reinforcing the patriarchal belief of women being



responsible to their husband and supporting the ‘doing gender’ theory that gender is reinforced with daily activities (for more on this, see Chapter Two).

Another interesting theme that emerged from the analysis was the concept of bulk cooking:

*“I tend to do bulk cooking during the weekends. Most times, I can prepare a pot of soup and a pot of stew and I freeze. But the day-to-day cooking, my help does that.”*

**(WM 9, Contract, Multinational Company)**

Another working mother said:

*“I have to go to the market during the weekends to buy foodstuffs. I prepare like two or three kinds of soups, apportion them into small packs in plastic bowls and put them in the freezer. So when I come back from work I just pick a bowl..., if there is no power outage I put it in the microwave to warm it and if there is power outage I warm it on the cooker then I can just boil rice...”*

**(WM 2, Customer Service, Indigenous Company)**

As discussed in the previous chapter, globalisation and the adoption of western values have led to the emergence of many restaurants in Nigeria, a trend amplified by time pressures, since most parents start early and finish late from work, leading to a decline in home cooking. In traditional societies in Nigeria, home-made meals are still preferred, although restaurants are rising to the challenge by introducing African kitchens as a separate section of their menu. Evidence from the study suggested that mothers gave a priority to bulk cooking during the weekends, although eating out was another option that mothers talked about to ease the stress of daily cooking.

For example, WM 29 disclosed the eating arrangements operating in her home. She and her husband had agreed that she was “excused” from preparing breakfast on working days to give her more time to attend to the children, although preparing a home-made dinner was essential. In order to cope with after school activities: showering the children, doing homework and getting them ready for bed, she sometimes bought food from restaurants on her way home (especially because she arrived earlier than her husband) and dished the meal on a plate to make her husband believe it was home-made! According to her, that helped reduce the stress of cooking on some days.

Like the planning of domestic tasks discussed in the previous section, prioritisation of domestic tasks has rarely been discussed in the literature on the African context apart from Waterhouse (2013) who reported bulk-cooking as a time-saving strategy by working mothers in Ghana to create more time for childcare.

Research evidence from Africa on coping strategies has provided evidence that has broadened our understanding about the reliance on sources of help, such as families (Ajayi et al., 2015; Annor, 2014; Epie & Ituma, 2014; Okonkwo, 2014) and/or outsourcing tasks to domestic help (Aryee, 2005, Muasya, 2014). These forms of support will be discussed in the next three sections.

#### **6.3.4 Social support from spouse and family**

Having discussed the strategies that working mothers adopted personally through the re-adjustment of their routine, it will be useful to document other sources of support to working mothers outside of work. The family still remains a source of social support for working families in Africa (Okonkwo, 2014). Mothers-in-law could offer this support (Annor, 2014) or support might come from distant relatives living in rural areas who have financial difficulties (Aryee, 2005). This practice is prevalent in parts of Africa and researchers have termed this arrangement a mutually beneficial relationship (Epie, 2011). As such, while the relative provides help for working mothers, the mothers become responsible for the upkeep and education of the relative. The case study below provides a good example of this relationship and illustrates a form of support upon which some working mothers in Nigeria rely in order to reduce the WLC they experience:

**Case study 1: Support from family members in a mutually beneficial relationship.**

*WM 20 was a working mother in a multinational company. She had a ten year old daughter. Early in her marriage she hired a domestic help but this relationship didn't work. Subsequently, she sourced help from relatives and friends who need assistance, especially those from her original village. By living in Lagos, rural dwellers believe that they can access better education or a better standard of living. As such, this becomes a mutually beneficial relationship for WM 20 and her relatives. For example, she assisted her aunt's daughter who finished her Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSCE) by allowing her to stay with her while waiting for admission into the University. At other times, she could invite relatives who need to re-sit SSCE exams by finding and paying for the remedial classes for a year and exams while they take care of household chores and child care responsibilities.*

*This meant her source of support keeps changing because her house was more like a transit route; a place where one could go to school, get all the support needed to pass, pass the exams and move on for another person to come in. WM 20 believes, however, that this class of people are more reliable than hired domestic helps and since she knows their parents, she could ask their parents to "call them to order when they misbehave."*

It is important to note that support from the husband is key in most homes when a woman is pursuing a career outside the home (Ajayi et al., 2015; Annor, 2014). In most cases, however, husbands agreeing to their wives working does not imply a transfer of home responsibilities or an agreement to share housework (Aluko, 2009, Odunaike, 2012). Women therefore have to continue to juggle work and family responsibilities or source alternative help. As Lyonette and Crompton (2015) argued, using the services of

external help reinforces traditional gender roles by providing an opportunity for men to avoid domestic work and this argument was supported by narratives constructed by working mothers in this research. WM 15, who has a help, explained how she divided the division of household chores between herself and her help; she pointed out that her husband does not offer a lot of help unless her nanny is not around, which is rare. As mentioned earlier in Chapter Two, housework is basically viewed as the women's responsibility and like earlier findings (Aluko, 2009), it was discovered that most of the time, the support that wives receive from their husbands is emotional rather than practical, except in critical situations:

*"Thank God I have an understanding husband to start with and he has been the one that has inspired me to achieve more in my career... There are periods when we are searching for help, between when the former ones leave and the new one comes, there is that window and he is usually very helpful with the house chores, cooking and taking care of the kids."*

**(WM 13, Engineering, Indigenous Company)**

It was easy to deduce from the narratives of working mothers that women who were married to men with more traditional views still did the bulk of household chores, including cooking regularly as they are left with few choices. A few of the mothers also talked about making elaborate meals after work due to their husbands' preferences. However, it was discovered that women who described their husbands as having more egalitarian views outsourced more chores and experienced less stress since the main goal of

the couple was to have those chores done, and the person who did them did not matter:

*“I think the key thing for a working mum is to have a supportive husband or it doesn’t work. If you are the sort of person that is married to a traditionalist who still insists that you make his meals and fresh soup every day, something will give. If the marriage doesn’t give, your work will give.”*

**(WM 7, HR, Multinational Company)**

Unlike household responsibilities that could be done after work or deferred till weekends, the complaints of most mothers related to having to work around activities that happen within official working hours and which could not be deferred. For example, WM20 narrated how challenging it was when she did not have any help to receive her daughter at home from the school bus for two weeks. As a result, she had to finish work earlier to pick her up from school. Challenges experienced by working mothers such as WM20 when there is no support from family members persuaded some mothers to seek external sources of help.

As discussed in earlier chapters, rural-urban migration has strained the communal and extended family relationships enjoyed by women with young children (Muasya, 2014). As such, in this study, mothers who still enjoy such support consider it a privilege and empathise with their colleagues who have to sort things out themselves. This was especially the case when considering the traffic situation in Lagos which makes taking short breaks from work to handle urgent family issues almost impossible. In order to

understand the varied individualised coping strategies devised by working mothers in reducing WLC and as such aiming to achieve WLB, the case presented study below explains in detail how a working mother was able to reconcile work and family responsibilities. After the following case study, the next section will address external sources of help used by working mothers in this study which sometimes are used in addition of family support.

### **Case study 2: Family as a source of social support.**

*WM 26 is an Engineer who is just about to be sent on a one year short-term assignment in America. She was reluctant in accepting the offer initially because she will have to leave her family behind in Nigeria. However, she later agreed to avail herself of the opportunity since it will help her exposure in the company and with subsequent career progression.*

*She decided to leave her children in Nigeria during her assignment because the company does not bear family related expenses when on short-term assignment and this implies that medical, schooling and all other running expenses were going to be borne by her which she believes is a huge financial drain of money that can be better spent at home. While away, the children will be left in the care of her mother-in-law and she was sure they were going to be looked after in terms of behaviour, feeding, their school homework and that they were going to be secure. The plan was for her children to call her regularly and to visit her during summer holidays while her husband commutes. More importantly, she is not going to have the kind of support system she enjoys in Nigeria when she is in America: her mother-in-law, her friends, her brothers and her maid. While it hurts that she will not see them every day, she believes her decision to go alone will be better for her children and herself because she will be able to focus on her work.*

### **6.3.5 The use of domestic help**

Subcontracting domestic responsibilities also emerged as a coping strategy during data coding. It is important to note that some parents are more comfortable leaving their children with close family members, rather than



strangers like domestic help and nannies. For this category of mothers, on the occasions where nannies are used, parents usually prefer to ensure that their activities are supervised by trusted family members. One working mother remarked:

*“At home..., I have my mum who I can trust. It is not like a nanny who you are not sure of. I am sure my mum will help look after the girl while I am away. It is just to make sure specific instructions are given and I am comfortable with leaving the little girl with my mum.”*

**(WM19, Engineering, Multinational Company)**

As in the previous discussion about the differing opinions on outsourcing options, parents also differ in their opinion about the use of either family members or nannies. A working mother was asked what she considered when choosing domestic help and she replied:

*“...I didn’t choose relatives for childcare support because it could turn into a problematic relationship. If I go for my own relatives..., every little issue is taken to the village to discuss. If you scold the child they’ll complain because the relative will think she is being maltreated despite the fact she is my relative. They believe they have rights and all those kinds of things. If I bring someone from my husband’s family also, your issues will be tabled before your mother-in-law and father-in-law. Due to these reasons, I decided I don’t want relatives, I want an outsider that I can sponsor her education while she assists me. Then, if I have any help to render to relatives, I will render that from a distance.”*

**(WM 27, Receptionist, Indigenous Company)**

The quotes above suggest that the use of immediate and distant family members in childcare and household responsibilities might be a preferred option for most families in Nigeria because of the issue of trust, but other contextual factors may also be responsible for their preference for alternative outsourcing options. Based on not too favourable experiences with family members or the inability to access help from relatives, mothers also resorted to sourcing help from external sources through the use of domestic help or day cares. Day care centres are usually more reliable and more structured than the use of domestic help.

#### **6.3.6 The use of day care services**

Like evidence presented from Zimbabwe (Mapedzahama, 2014), the provision of day care in Nigeria is also typically left in the hands of private individuals. The cost of these services vary, depending on how well-equipped they are, how reputable the owners are and how close their location is to the Central Business District. Day care centres have evolved from providing services during school hours and are now sometimes extended until 9 pm to suit the schedules of busy parents. A few also provide overnight services to parents who work on a shift basis (e.g., nurses). For young children, after school clubs are also useful to ensure that children are looked after until the arrival of their parents or until the time school buses drop them at home. These services are usually paid for separately, in addition to school fees. Some mothers voiced their preference for day care services rather than domestic help because of reliability. One of the

differences noticed in the coping strategies employed by working mothers in Nigeria and the West is that, unlike in some advanced countries where the use of day care is the norm (Cascio, Haider & Nielsen, 2015) and the use of a nanny is the exception to childcare (Craig & Baxter, 2016), in Nigeria and as reported in some other parts of Africa (Mapedzahama, 2014), the use of domestic helps/nannies for childcare needs is pervasive and day care use is only recently evolving.

In addition to the points made in the earlier sections on external sources of help, this section will summarise working mothers' preferences. Mothers in this study differed in their outsourcing preferences, varying between those who did all their tasks themselves and those who relied on help from others. Narratives constructed by mothers and summarising their preferences are presented below:

*"I feel most working mothers that have issues with..., 'I am stressed...' it's because they don't believe in asking for help, they don't believe in nannies... However you need to rely on help because the business is not going to be waiting for you because you are a working mother. You have to make sacrifices as well."*

**(WM 14, Facility-Engineering, Multinational Company)**

Twenty-six of out of the thirty working mothers who took part in this study used either a nanny, a maid or a house cleaner while three mothers (WM2, WM5 and WM 29) did their chores using a combination of themselves, their spouses and other relatives. Only one working mother who was widowed (WM 18) did all her chores and childcare related tasks personally. As stated

in the methodology chapter, it should be noted that nanny, house cleaner, maid and other external sources of help were grouped together in the analysis because of the non-specificity of their tasks. Some mothers opted for domestic helps because they preferred babies to remain within the confines of their homes, while others preferred to take their children to trained specialists in day care centres:

*“Where my baby is staying is very expensive, however we are not naturally comfortable with nannies; leaving your child with a stranger at home. My husband is not just comfortable with that. He prefers the baby is in school and we just pick him up on our way back from work.”*

**(WM 11, Engineering, Multinational Company)**

Another mother had a differing opinion:

*“...why does it matter who is giving that care at that time... that is the way I see it. For me a child would always know who his mother is... If I see that my child is withdrawn or he is not responding to the kind of stimuli he should be responding to by his age... then I might have to say something is not working here. My boy is doing great. My philosophy is if it is working why fix it... what do you want to fix in it.”*

**(WM 7, HR, Multinational Company)**

*“I had to leave the house latest 6 am and of course I take my children with me. Taking my children with me is because my children’s school has always been on the island, as I have worked on the island. My husband and I took that decision because we did not want to be at the mercy of carers and nannies. You know you have one today and you don’t have one tomorrow and then with all stories you hear about what goes on when you are not around.*

*We have been married for fourteen years and the first five and half years of our marriage, we have fertility issues. So of course we don't joke with our children and we realised that our children are our priority basically. So that was part of what influenced the decision whereby my children have always been to school on the island so they can be close to me."*

**(WM 30, Contract, Multinational Company)**

An important trend noticed in the choice of childcare outsourcing was that the previous experiences of mothers played a huge role in arriving at their preferred option. For example, WM30, described above, preferred handling childcare responsibilities personally because of her previous fertility issues, while some other mothers were hesitant about hiring domestic help because of their unreliability or because of widespread news of kidnapping or ill-treatment by helps. While the previous sections discussed different sources of physical support that working mothers have either devised or enjoyed within the home, the next section discusses organisational support from supervisors and colleagues.

### **6.3.7 Drawing on the support of supervisors and colleagues**

After considering the personal strategies devised by mothers in balancing work and family responsibilities, further analysis revealed that working mothers relied on and benefited from support from their workplaces, supervisors and colleagues in managing WLC. The literature review also revealed the importance of supervisor support in achieving WLB and

ensuring the effectiveness of organisational policies (Aryee et al., 2013). In this research, concessions were sometimes given to working mothers to accommodate family needs and this had been largely achieved in multinational companies by putting in place helpful structures and policies, although the indigenous companies had also been trying to inculcate this as much as possible. For example, a novel role played by a multinational company (which was an isolated incident) in helping working families was also explained by a working mother (WM 19), where she talked about the company organising summer schools for employees' children during the long school holidays to help ease the burden of childcare. This resonates with Aryee's (2005) argument about the extra responsibilities that companies in some parts of Africa sometimes take up because of the transfer of the communal culture from the society to the workplace. Evidence of such policies was also present in this research, for example, where companies pay a fixed amount on the death of a partner or parents as a contribution towards burial expenses.

An interesting finding from all the companies involved in this study was the emphasis on employees using their annual vacation days and this was a general finding from the narratives of HR practitioners in both indigenous and multinational companies. In addition, some of the companies banned the 'buying back' of leave which means that leave days not used in a particular year were forfeited (i.e., to try and encourage staff to take their full holiday entitlement). Supervisors were also held accountable for ensuring that the vacations of their subordinates were properly planned at the

beginning of the year and overtime was discouraged to try and ensure that employees engaged in recreation and relaxation, coming back to work refreshed. Vacation planning therefore served as a strategy that working mothers used to manage work and family by taking up the support offered at the organisational level.

Realising the importance attached to the family by companies, both supervisors and working mothers emphasised the importance of communication in relationships and the move away from 'presenteeism' which is prevalent in the Nigerian work environment. The discrepancy between a long working hours culture as reported by employees and HR practitioners, and supervisors' claim of this practice being frowned upon by companies, was however clarified by some supervisors who provided further evidence that workers in Nigeria willingly worked beyond official closing time to demonstrate commitment to organisational goals.

Although managers differed in their level of accommodation, it was interesting to listen to interviews with supervisors which implied that they recognise that work and family are equally important and that both should bring fulfilment. In explaining the work-family relationship, one supervisor (LM 2) said:

*"Work is enjoyable. As enjoyable as work could be, you still need to do things that are not work... we all have people that matter to us; wives, children, friends, family, religion, society...so many things that we are also a part of. So we can't spend all our time on just one aspect of life so that we can be a complete person..."*

### **(LM 2, Indigenous Company)**

This example could also perhaps be linked to a realisation by companies that informal support from supervisors is needed to make formal structures/policies work, a view which is supported by previous research (Aryee et al., 2013; Bagger & Li, 2014).

Multinationals tend to have more female employees and as such have recognised the need to institute more family-friendly policies in order to accommodate their needs (Aryee et al., 1998), especially because of the global minimum standards required of subsidiary companies. Generally, supervisors talked about sometimes delegating some of the working mothers' tasks to their colleagues when there was a need to attend to emergencies or urgent family responsibilities, and having a WLB mind-set:

*“WLB is having a mind-set and following that up with activities that balance business requirements of achieving business goals and targets with appreciating that people also have life outside of the business, particularly their families, their interests and trying to manage that balance. However at the end of the day, the priority will be to ensure we meet the business objectives... but somewhere along the line there is a sweet spot where everybody can win.”*

### **(LM 3, Indigenous Company)**

It is important to note however that the success of the implementation of formal workplace policies depends largely on supervisor buy-in:



*“My supervisor is a family oriented person. I tell him my heart...once it is family related; he doesn't have a problem with it. He... very rarely has he asked me to come in on a Saturday or a weekend... only during drilling operations where most of the time I can plan ahead.”*

**(WM 9, Engineering, Multinational Company)**

The collective culture in Nigerian society is also prevalent in Nigerian organisations (Ovadge & Ankomah, 2001). Although there might be only a few workplace flexibility options in Nigeria, evidence from this study and earlier research suggest that supervisors are empathetic and offer informal support (Annor, 2014; Epie & Ituma, 2014). This was obvious when working mothers described their relationship with their bosses as cordial and they saw their supervisors as supportive. The supportive culture was also confirmed by supervisors. For example, LM1 affirmed that during peak periods when employees worked beyond the official closing times, they were usually allowed to resume later than the official resumption time the following day.

However, it is also important to note that there were various informal mechanisms in place to accommodate the family demands of working mothers (like occasionally working from home due to the need to attend to emergencies or other family responsibilities), especially with the recent focus on diversity and inclusiveness programmes by companies. Although companies tend to help people with family responsibilities balance work and family through the introduction of family-friendly policies, a family-supportive work environment proved to be more effective in making this happen:

*“Well, my job is very hectic, but I do have understanding supervisors and colleagues. Luckily I work with all men but they do understand. Like my supervisor knows that when I put my fingers on my wrist watch at 12 noon, he knows that I have to pick my daughter.”*

**(WM 25, Supply chain, Multinational Company)**

Empathy was also evident in some of the narratives of the supervisors. Supervisors demonstrated some form of interest in the personal lives of employees, which went a long way in helping working mothers manage the challenges they faced in other aspects of their lives. For instance, LM3 talked about the need for empathy as a skill that is required for supervisors in accommodating the needs of working mothers and generally people with family responsibilities.

Having identified that working mothers experience work and family related time-based conflicts, especially because some of the activities competing for their time are prioritised as equally important (e.g. taking a child to the hospital and meeting a submission deadline at work) (Aryee, 1992), the development of these coping strategies might provide help in work-life navigation. It is important to note that all the strategies discussed so far are also essential in reducing strain-based sources of conflict.

In summary, time-based conflict has been looked at from the point of view of working mothers' strategies and the additional support offered by the family, external sources of help and the workplace. Although most of the earlier research referred to at the beginning of this chapter revolved around coping strategies in the work and family domains in most parts of Africa from

the perspective of the worker, this study has not only provided additional evidence to buttress this argument but it has also discussed other forms of support provided within the organisation. In order to cope with multiple roles and demands for time in the work and family domains, some working mothers moved closer to their workplaces, planned and prioritised household and personal activities as well as relying on different forms of support available within the family and the work domains. The literature has provided evidence of long working hours culture in some parts of Africa (Annor, 2014; Mordi et al., 2013) and this argument was supported by narratives from some working mothers. However, the HR practitioners and supervisors interviewed provided narratives that suggest that formal support like mandatory holidays were provided to staff generally and informal support was also offered to working mothers by discouraging working beyond the official closing times or working overtime unless this was considered necessary and the consent of employees' supervisors had been sought. The next section discusses strain-based sources of conflict.

#### **6.4 Strain-based sources of conflict**

As discussed in chapter two, strain-based conflict emanates when stress and fatigue experienced in a role prevent one from performing well in another role. This includes any work-related events that could lead to strain. According to Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), lack of autonomy, stressful events at work and lack of supervisor support are some of the factors that may be responsible for this. It is important to note that the strategies

discussed under time-based sources are also applicable under strain-based conflict. For example, while planning and prioritisation of domestic tasks, closing early, spousal support and relying on external sources of support can reduce work and family-related time-based conflict, it also reduces the stress, fatigue and strain employees go through on a daily basis. The remaining part of this section will therefore discuss additional strain-based strategies.

#### **6.4.1 Emotional management**

Unemployment has been linked to high levels of stress in Africa due to the absence of a state-sponsored social security system (Epie & Ituma, 2014) and job insecurity has been reported as one of the main causes of stress in Sub-Saharan Africa (Aryee, 2005). In a collectivist environment like Nigeria, where being employed is seen as a sacrifice for the family (Aryee, 2005), most workers count themselves lucky to be employed (Mordi et al., 2013). In accepting their fate and justifying that working is their best option, mothers often included the word 'lucky' in their narratives and being employed is itself a strategy for managing work-related strain-based conflict:

*"I won't say I have it all but I think mothers working in oil and gas are luckier. We are pretty lucky because I think we have a pretty decent work life balance compared to mothers working in banks"*

**(WM 25, Supply chain, Multinational Company)**

WM 22 also expressed her feelings of how she initially found managing work and family responsibilities challenging and that over time, she learnt to

accept that if she was to remain in the labour market, she had to change her mind-set from perceiving the work-family interaction challenges as stressful but rather as a choice she had to accept. After examining the data from the interviews, it was discovered that similar examples of emotional development strategies identified by Akanji (2012) were constructed by the working mothers in the research described here. According to Akanji (2012:258), *cognitive survival and personal hardiness are psychological and physical coping strategies for Nigerians*. A working mother said:

*“The tendency is if you don’t know how to step out of work emotionally, you’ll take it home and you’ll find yourself being really upset. You’ll be asking yourself what’s wrong undermining the fact that pressure from work can actually affect your relationships at home. I have had days when I get home and I first of all shout at my kids and when I settle down I just say, ‘hey! They didn’t do anything wrong, they are the ones that give me joy’ then I bring them all to my room...”*

**(WM 23, Administration, Multinational Company)**

Being a sector where the main operators are multinational companies who strive to adopt global best workplace practices as much as possible, working in the oil and gas sector is in itself a strategy to manage work and family responsibilities because it offers the best of both worlds: being employed in one of the highest paying sectors in Nigeria, as well as working in a sector where some policies are aimed at reducing the stress experienced by working families, especially when compared with previous evidence from the manufacturing and banking sectors in Nigeria (Ajayi et al., 2015; Mordi et al., 2013; Mordi & Ojo, 2011). Being employed also provided a sense of

fulfilment and achievement for mothers contributing to the economic upkeep of the family and some of the mothers were happy they were working, rather than being full-time housewives.

It is useful to note that emotional coping strategies varied from woman to woman. While the quote stated above from WM 23 depicts a scenario of separating work and life spheres mentally to avoid the transfer of strain from one role to the other, some working mothers believed that the solution might be to change one's mind-set about conflict and accept the status quo.

Apart from managing themselves, working mothers also discovered that in managing work and family domains, there was the need to manage relationships with other people that they relate with at work and at home. This will be discussed in subsequent sections.

#### **6.4.2 Relational management at work**

As stated in the pilot study chapter, this study was not originally designed to include supervisors but the narratives of working mothers suggests that their support was essential in understanding how they survived in the work environment.

Supportive work-environment, colleagues and supervisors have previously been reported to reduce strain-based conflict (Aryee et al., 2013; Bagger & Li, 2014). It was interesting to find out from this study that mothers developed proactive behaviours to manage their supervisors to ensure they were able to attend to emergency family responsibilities while at work. For example, one working mother said:

*“My current boss is a woman. If I want a favour like taking my child for immunisation I’ll go and meet her so that her approval will over-ride my supervisor’s who is a man and might not understand.”*

**(WM 23, Administration, Multinational Company)**

Another mother said:

*“You can try to change their mind-set. Women tend to put their issues in the forefront. For example, everybody knows your child is sick. Sometimes I notice... the men... they go out and do these other things... they take their wives to the clinic but they don’t put it at the fore. One of my colleagues will just say, ‘I’ll be back in thirty minutes I need to pick my daughter after school’. That thirty minutes..., with Lagos traffic you can make it like an hour but my boss will not notice because after that he comes and sits here till 8 pm (laughs). I think the way to manage it is... trying not to put your issue at the fore and always panicking especially for those you can manage. Try to do it the way the men do it... keep it to yourself (laughs)”*

**(WM15, Geology, Multinational Company)**

These exhibited behaviours were not only restricted to dealing with supervisors, but were also extended to colleagues. For example, a working mother described how she managed to gain support from her colleagues:

*“I know how to work my way into people’s hearts and it helps me get things done. I need that help sometimes, especially when I try to be involved in my children’s life. Sometimes I meet a colleague to help and you’ll be amazed that what could have taken me one hour... he’ll just give me an idea that will solve the thing for me in fifteen minutes.”*

**(WM 12, HR, Indigenous Company)**

Aluko (2009) reported a similar finding in her study of professional women working in academia and in the banking sector in Nigeria and how they made changes to their lives in order not to draw attention to their family lives because their workplaces were not family-oriented. In this study, there were also accounts of working mothers getting support from colleagues through the sharing of mothering experiences and ideas, and getting tips from colleagues with older children. This advice was helpful in understanding how other mothers handled situations in their homes in the past; a guide of what worked and what did not work. This also served as a source of emotional support for working mothers, especially for those with young children. Mothers also emphasised how helpful discussions with colleagues had been in solving some of their home-related challenges, especially in relation to childcare but also to relationship management. Relationship management at home is particularly helpful for mothers in Nigeria where marriages are generally believed to be a union between families, with wives expected to be submissive not only to their husband but also to their in-laws (Aina, 1998, Dibia, 2009). The importance of relationship management with family members cannot be over-emphasised since they remain a primary source of social support in most Africa societies (Annor, 2014, Okonkwo, 2014).

#### **6.4.3 Giving a spiritual explanation for events**

As stated in the literature review section of this thesis, recent events like terrorist attacks and job insecurity (which has increased due to the global



economic recession) have made many employees search for an inner meaning to life (Garcia-Zamor, 2003). While relational and emotional management can help reduce stress, evidence from this study has also shown that spirituality and the embrace of religion might be useful in reducing strain-related source of conflict. Initial analysis shows that all women interviewed talked about one form of religious activity or affiliation. This included daily early morning prayers, attending church activities or being a part of a religious group e.g. church choir. Fear of and belief in God were also recurrent statements from working mothers during the interviews. For example, in explaining some of the skills transfer between the work and family domains, WM 30 attributed qualities such as caring, having empathy and being respectful to be enhanced due to maturity and the fear of God. An earlier research study presented evidence of an association of ethical values with religion (Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002) and this argument was discussed in the literature review. Nigerians believe God is responsible for many things, especially for good events and experiences. WM 18 said:

*“I am a Christian, I believe that where I will get to in life is in the hand of God...”*

God is therefore viewed as an active participant in everyday interaction (Pargament et al., 1988). Also WM 26 who was leaving her family in Nigeria and going for a short-term expatriate assignment in USA for a few months after the interview narrated how she sometimes got confused and in her subconscious mind asked God for direction. In her words she said,

*“...any time I think about my foreign posting, I am like... God, am I doing the right thing? I hope my children will be fine.”*

This tends to serve as a succour or explanation for events during troubled times (Mordi et al., 2013; Onuoha, 2005). In line with arguments from previous research that has argued for the role of religion in providing support during troubled times (Hall et al., 2011; Pierce, 2010), working mothers in the research presented here constructed similar narratives:

*“I think God has been helping me...”*

**(WM 13, Engineering, indigenous Company)**

*“I thank God that I have a supportive husband who is there for me. I have tried helps... but it just didn't work out for me. So I took it that God doesn't just want me to have one... maybe that's why He gave me a good man who is willing to help out wherever he can...”*

**(WM in the Pilot study, Financial Services)**

It was also interesting to discover that apart from work and family related activities, some mothers could not think about other activities they partook in, apart from religious activities. While some working mothers attributed the absence of extra-curricular activities to lack of time, time for religious activities was still created and a sense of frustration was constructed when work and family activities prevented this. Mordi et al. (2013) reported a similar finding among managers working in the banking sector in Nigeria. Although spirituality at work (Garcia-Zamor, 2003, Neal, 2012), and the benefits of employers accommodating the spirituality needs of employees

(Ajala, 2013; Jason & Sudha, 2014), have been discussed in prior studies, spirituality as a coping strategy to manage work and family related stress is still in its infancy (Paul, Dutta & Saha, 2015). This study provides a basis for further research on the relationship.

The section has covered the coping strategies that have been devised by working mothers to cope with the strain experienced in navigating between the work and home domains. These strategies have been structured around positive thinking, and other emotional and relational management strategies used by working mothers. This section concluded with the role of spirituality as a coping strategy.

As stated in earlier chapters, evidence from this study suggests that the availability of support from family, the regular and cheap supply of domestic help, provide a major source of support to working mothers in Sub-Saharan Africa compared to their western counterparts. These factors might be responsible for the slow embrace of flexible work arrangements (FWA) by companies and this argument is supported by Aryee (2005) who also argued that FWAs might not reduce work-life conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa.

## **6.5 Behaviour-based Conflict**

Behaviour-based conflict occurs when expectations from two different roles differ and this is said to increase WLC. Although empirical evidence from literature in Africa was not included in Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) classification of coping strategies used by workers, especially working mothers, further investigation by the researcher reveals that previous

findings in Africa do address strategies for coping with time and strain-based conflicts. This is not surprising, however, because evidence from this study shows that the coping strategies used by working mothers to cope with this type of conflict were mostly mental and emotional. This source of conflict will be discussed in subsequent sections.

#### **6.5.1 Embrace of professional values**

Chowwen (2007) reported in her study that while some women preserved subtle resistance to the values espoused by their male colleagues, some were vocal in recognising professional ways of thinking and behaving. To support Chowwen's (2007) research, as cited in Chapter Eight, one of the working mothers in this study, WM16, said *"I don't consider myself to be a woman at heart"* and she repeatedly challenged her male colleagues when she felt there were more efficient ways of making decisions. WM 30 said *"I treat my male subordinates with respect and they treat me with respect. Once or twice, someone stepped out... in a very professional and firm way I brought them back."*

On the part of the companies, efforts were made to ensure equal pay for equal work. Bearing in mind that interviews conducted were semi-structured and some participants answered additional questions based on their responses, HR practitioners who talked about pay confirmed that men and women were paid equal salaries: the same pay for the same work. Additionally, HR1 explained that his company carried out periodic gender skills checks. According to him, the purpose of the skills checks was to

ensure there was no bias towards one kind of demography or the other. He also narrated:

*“in terms of gender stuff... every couple of years we have the pay equality check where we run detailed checks to see if pay gaps are existing between genders... which for whatever reason might not have been picked on day-to-day basis but over a period of time can be picked up... we sort of look out to make sure people are not disadvantaged for reasons that are not performance related.”*

This evidence suggests that in establishing authority and competence, working mothers embrace professional values at work. Although it can be argued that these values are not values expected from a mother, they can be relevant in maintaining discipline among children within the home. Additionally, the Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) argument for the behaviour-based source of conflict can be faulted on the premise that good leaders need a blend of assertive and emotional skills to function effectively. It could therefore be said that although expectations from the woman in the work and home domains could be argued to be in conflict, there are some beneficial aspects as well. Additionally, the survival and confidence of working mothers in male-dominated environments or male structured workplaces could have been enhanced if there were opportunities to learn and network with women in management positions with similar experiences. This will be the focus of the next section.

### 6.5.2 Availability of female mentors

Female mentors are not readily available in Nigerian workplaces (Mordi et al., 2011), especially in male dominated professions, but have been recognised to be a critical factor that could enhance women's self-confidence and career development (Adogbo, Ibrahim, & Ibrahim, 2015; Omar & Ogenyi, 2004). In tackling this challenge, Mordi et al. (2011) recommended social networks as a career advancement strategy. In this study, Multinational Companies (MNCs) recognised the women's network as an important platform to air women's grievances and were available in most of those included in this study. Although researchers have investigated the role of women's networks as an agency for negotiation of power and presence by females in their workplaces in developing and developed economies (Mordi et al., 2011), their impact as a coping strategy for WLC has been rarely discussed. In expressing her happiness about the achievements of the network, a working mother said:

*"I think the first the women's network has done is to make us important first of all...okay knowing that we have a female network to speak with each other you know... forget about work and address our issues as women... It also tries to look at those issues that are typical to a woman within a working environment. It is no longer generalised and it is particular to the fact that we are females. It tries to handle issues that women face within the workplace or at home. Some of us might not willingly go for a social gathering because of the kind of mix of people that you would not necessarily want to socialise with but with this you know... it is just a network, we are all women and you feel free to talk. It is also good in terms of socialising.*

**(WM19, Field Operations, Multinational Company)**

Another mother remarked:

*“If I can recall years ago, it was the women’s network that started this thing about the crèche because we didn’t always have it. And even when we had it, it was one tiny office sitting somewhere in one car park you know... we kept pushing and eventually we got approval for a bigger place...”*

**(WM 7, HR, Multinational Company)**

Being an area with limited research in Nigeria, the case study below provides empirical evidence that extends our knowledge on the role of companies in creating and developing working mothers’ access to leadership opportunities through the creation of a platform for women to network with other female professionals.

### **Case study 3 - company provision of a networking platform for women**

*The contents of this case study were some of the narratives extracted from the interviews conducted with HR practitioners, working mothers, supervisors and a member of Women's World (a company initiative protecting the rights of female workers) in Jupiter plc. Also, the researcher was provided with a one-page document that showed some of Woman's World's activities.*

*Jupiter Nigeria plc was a multinational in the oil and gas sector on Nigeria which was committed to professionalism, equal opportunity, fairness, good work life balance, mutual respect and dignity at work for all employees. It created a work environment where inclusion was part of the corporate culture, where employees were valued for their skills and talents, and where they were appreciated for their uniqueness. In recognition of the need of a platform to channel information about female employees' needs to management, it officially launched an initiative called Women's World in 2011 in Nigeria, although before then it had existed in the company's headquarters and in a few other countries in Europe. It was launched to create an avenue where female employees could discuss, share challenges, exchange ideas, share experiences and network. There was an initial reluctance from female employees to join but with the roll out of a few activities, confidence increased. The initial focus of the platform was to create awareness informally of the hidden potential of women by organising programmes where top level female executives within and outside the oil and gas sector could share their experiences with them. It also gave a voice to members on current issues; members' experiences, work life balance, occupational hazards and the slow progression of women.*

*At the time of the interview, having a female MD also created another opportunity for women to meet her and they discussed the challenges they faced at work on an informal basis. The platform also supported women by providing professional career advice and emphasised rewarding and promoting women based on merit. Women's world also liaised with similar organisations in other Multinational Companies within the oil and gas sector which were sometimes invited them to their activities.*

*Women's World monitored the recruitment process to ensure women were given equal opportunities and insisted that females in operations should be exposed to rig operations especially in their early career years where they might be unmarried or married without children (the slogan is "use them when they are available"). Bearing in mind that the creation of the platform was a recent event, it hadn't been able to influence any of the policies in the workplace affecting women. However, it was able to lobby for women to be given priority when it came to allocating slots in the company day care centre.*



*Another landmark achievement of the Women's World initiative was the success of their mentoring programme, whereby inexperienced employees were linked with their senior colleagues around the World to provide guidance, and this process took place through various media like teleconferencing and through phone calls. Members of Women's World also reached out to their larger community; career advice was given to girls from disadvantaged backgrounds to clarify any misconceptions that students may have about University.*

### **6.5.3 Skills transferred from work to home and from home to work**

Recent research has provided evidence of a positive relationship, where skills and experience acquired in one role can make functioning easier in the other (Brough et al., 2014; Carlson et al., 2006; Kalliath, 2013). Although some working mothers talked about work and family being conflicting spheres, most agreed that the relationship could be mutually beneficial. Construction of narratives about the positive side of the work-life navigation was different for working mothers:

*"The work we do here is technical and what we do at home is not technical so the only way I can correlate the two is talking about non-technical things that I am doing at work. So if you are talking about multi-tasking which is a normal thing for a woman especially a wife or a mother... yeah that I have learnt to do. Also, there is a lot of emphasis on team work because you can't work alone; you'll need something from one person and another person"*

**(WM 5, Engineering, Indigenous Company)**

Other working mothers viewed it differently:

*“At home I have domestic staff and sometimes they can be really hard to manage so I try to take the approach of the office here...I also take planning home and I try to do a lot of communication because these people are not as intellectually capable as you are, so you need to break things down to the barest minimum so that they understand what they are expected to do.”*

**(WM 23, Administration, Multinational Company)**

WM7, an HR practitioner also related how her advisory role to colleagues at work has made her a better manager and she has been able to use the skills acquired at work when relating with her husband at home. It is interesting to note that working mothers varied in how skill transfer between the work and home domains was achieved. While working mothers in non-core business operations (front desk officers, HR and customer service and corporate services) could relate their home responsibilities to the tasks carried out daily on their jobs, mothers in technical services (engineering) could do so in the same way, as highlighted in the quote from WM5 above. However, they acknowledged the acquisition of soft skills: planning, relationship and time management was necessary at home and in their workplaces. An interesting finding was that soft skills acquired at work were beneficial qualities necessary for being a good wife and mother, for example, they help in the efficient planning and management of work and family activities. It also becomes useful in relationship and conflict management in a communal environment like Nigeria where mothers and wives have to manage spouse and in-law relationships.

In summary, tackling behaviour-based sources of WLC is still an emerging process, and mothers have developed emotional strategies to deal with male colleagues and subordinates alike. Additionally, companies have sought to achieve and maintain equal pay for all employees, irrespective of gender, and multinationals have also supported the formation of women's networks.

## **6.6 Summary**

This chapter examined one of the emerging themes from the study, "coping strategies". The coping strategies of working mothers have been analysed by using the focal theory of this study, the sources of conflict model developed by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) as the framework for analysis. The model divided the sources of conflict into three; time-based, strain-based and behaviour based conflicts.

The potential stress faced by some women associated with everyday life, taking care of household chores/childcare, and at the same time working outside the home, requires different coping strategies. The coping strategies discussed in the literature on work and family in advanced economies may not help to solve many of the challenges working families face in Nigeria: cultural contexts differ and the environment also has its own infrastructural challenges. In contrast to Scandinavian countries, where support for working families is seen as a state role (Lyonette et al., 2007; Cascio et al., 2015), researchers on work and family in Africa have discussed this concept mostly at the individual level because of limited support provided by the

government (Akanji, 2013) and childcare responsibilities have been perceived as a personal rather than a societal problem by working mothers (Aluko, 2009).

Strategies discussed under time-based conflict could also function as strain-based strategies because, as much as these strategies save time spent on work and family activities, they also reduce strain on working mothers. Strategies used by working mothers in this study have varied from emotional engagement in the form of positive thinking, acceptance of their fate and emotional support received from colleagues to role re-structuring. They have involved working mothers re-arranging their tasks and tapping into other people's resources through the outsourcing of domestic and childcare responsibilities and benefitting from the help rendered by families in reducing conflicts experienced within the work and family spheres. More importantly is the realisation by most working mothers that work and family could be potential allies (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006) and that working is not all about conflict (Brough et al., 2014). Narratives from working mothers point to the fact that the soft skills acquired at home (relationship management, multi-tasking and patience) could be useful in surviving in the workplace, while skills like time-management and planning acquired at work can be useful in being more effective at home. Other strategies used by mothers are the prioritisation of tasks into what they perceive as core, which they do themselves, while outsourcing other routine tasks that require less skill.

Behaviour-based coping strategies were used drawing upon a combination of emotional and relational support by the working mothers. On the part of the companies, efforts were made to ensure women were supported with networking and attempts were made to provide equal opportunities, including equal pay for women. Historically, documentary evidence has attested to the role of women in community activities and the usefulness of their networks in channelling their grievances (Amadiume, 1987). An interesting finding from this research is the impact of women's networks in workplaces and their role in acting as a collective voice for women, as well as serving as a platform where women can mentor other women. It is important to note that women's networks were only available in the MNCs used in this study. Although the importance of female mentors has been discussed in African literature (Chovwen, 2007; Omar & Ogenyi, 2004), investigation into the activities and importance of women's networks in workplaces has been scanty (Mordi et al., 2011).

An aspect that is relatively new in the field of work and family is the concept of spirituality in the workplace. Although spirituality has been discussed with and without a religious connotation, spirituality in the Nigerian context involves the belief in God, a higher being who has the ability to run people's affairs in the best way. God is central in the mind of most Nigerians and the belief in God serves as a succour during troubled times or stressful situations.

It was also discovered that the communal culture or orientation in Nigerian society has been transferred to the workplace. This was demonstrated by

narratives that suggested organisations and supervisors were interested in the personal/family issues that employees were facing. Working mothers and supervisors believe this had led to positive working relationships and it is supported by earlier research that argued that flexible workplace arrangements (FWAs) and supervisor's support are key in reducing work-life conflict experienced by employees and in increasing job satisfaction (Aryee et al., 2013; Bagger & Li, 2014).

A striking difference in the way coping strategies have been viewed in advanced and emerging economies is that research in the West has concentrated more on the role of government in supporting working families (e.g., in the form of leave and childcare support), while in emerging economies, discussions are more at the micro level. Although individuals and families are more likely to bear the bulk of the burden of coping in Nigeria, strategies have been discussed based on the role of institutions (government, organisations and families) and the individual.

## **CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS**

### **7.1 Introduction**

This study analysed how the lives of professionals, who are also mothers, are affected by cultural and institutional factors as they navigate between their work and family spheres. Previous studies in Nigeria have studied work and family by concentrating on the banking sector (Ajayi et al., 2015; Mordi et al., 2013; Mordi & Ojo, 2011; Oludayo et al., 2015), academia (Aluko, 2009; Ojo et al., 2014), civil service (Omar & Ogenyi, 2004) and manufacturing sector (Okafor, Fagbemi, & Hassan, 2011). However, findings from a pilot study conducted by the researcher suggest that amongst the five sectors in Nigeria used in the study (oil and gas, telecommunications, financial services and manufacturing), oil and gas has the most robust family-friendly policies, hence the choice of this sector for the main study. Additionally, as operators in the oil and gas sector in Nigeria consist of a mix of indigenous and multinational companies, it was envisaged that it would be useful to compare work-life balance (WLB) policies and practices based on ownership structure.

Previous studies in Africa suggested the need for further research to aid our understanding of what WLB in different cultural contexts entails (Kossek & Ollier-Malaterre, 2013). So this research sought to contribute to confirming or dispelling the generalisability of WLB theories developed in advanced economies (Aryee, 2005), thereby filling part of the gap in that literature.

This chapter will discuss the contributions of the theories discussed in chapter three and the extent to which the literature supports the findings of this study. Later sections will discuss the contributions of this study, the implications of the findings for government and organisations, the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research based on the findings. The next section discusses the contribution of the theoretical framework to the research.

## **7.2 Contributions of theoretical frameworks to the research**

Role theory has shaped our understanding about functioning in multiple roles. It argues that human beings are social actors who handle roles that have defined expectations and, as such, taking up multiple roles with varied expectations might lead to conflict. Being a theory of general application, the arguments of role theorists have been tested in work and family research and this has given birth to work-life conflict (WLC) theories. These theories have been useful in this study in explaining why working mothers continue to experience conflict as they navigate their work and home spheres. Particularly important is the focal theory of this study, Greenhaus & Beutell's (1985) sources of conflict model which grouped earlier studies on conflict experienced by workers into three: time-based, strain-based and behaviour-based sources of conflict. For example, to demonstrate family related time-based conflict, Ekert-Jaffé (2011) reported that dual earner couples with two children experience five hours of forgone leisure per day when looking after their young children. This study was therefore helpful in



clarifying the sources of conflict prevalent in Nigeria and a previous study clearly showed that family-related time and strain based conflicts have not been widely reported within the Nigerian context (Okonkwo, 2014), unlike documented evidence in advanced economies (Penfold & Foxton, 2015). It is suggested that the absence of these type of conflicts is due to the social support from family members and easy access to domestic help in Nigeria (Okonkwo, 2014). However, like similar studies conducted in Africa (Mordi et al., 2013; Akanji, 2013; Epie & Ituma, 2014), work-related time and strain-based conflict was prevalent. Much of the related literature in Africa has generalised the conflicts experienced by working mothers (Balogun, 2014; Salami, 2007; Ajayi et al., 2015). One of the unique findings from this research is that by examining conflicts through the lens of Greenhaus & Beutell's (1985) model, it was apparent that work-related time-based, work-related strain-based conflict and behaviour-based conflict were not only prevalent in Nigerian workplaces, but also their intensity might be higher than that experienced in advanced economies. These conflicts follow partly as a result of infrastructural inefficiencies which might aggravate time and strain-based conflict, while the patriarchal and traditional gender ideology of Nigerian society and workplaces intensifies behaviour-based conflicts.

In respect of the few studies in Nigeria that described conflict using specific parameters, for example, strain-based family interference with work (Okonkwo, 2014), working hours and work-family conflict (Epie & Ituma, 2014), data collection instruments were designed to elicit responses specific to a particular type of conflict. Whereas in this study, the interview guide

was designed in a semi-structured and open-ended format in order to allow themes to emerge naturally.

Work-life enrichment provided a theoretical basis for discussing the positive side of combining work and family, as discussed in chapter two. In addition, theories on the division of domestic labour, economic exchange and doing gender have aided our understanding about why women's traditional responsibility for housework and childcare is maintained within the Nigerian context. Having discussed the major contributions of various theoretical frameworks to this work, some of the emerging themes from the research will be discussed.

### **7.3 Empirical contributions**

In the course of the data analysis, new insights emerged from useful themes coded. Their contribution to knowledge will be the focus of this section.

#### **7.3.1 Work-life conflict**

Generally, much of the literature on work in Nigeria has discussed the culture of working long hours and evidence found to support this argument has been described extensively in chapters two, three and five (see, for example, Mordi, 2013; Akanji, 2012). It is important to note that, somewhat ironically, working mothers, HR practitioners and supervisors in this study said on various occasions that staying beyond official working hours was not encouraged unless it was necessary and that supervisors' approval was

necessary. Although the reasons for working long hours were attributed to large volumes of work and tight deadlines, Epie (2014) also reported that 25% of her respondents worked long hours because they enjoyed their job while 43% said they worked long hours by choice. This conflicts with the findings of Mordi (2013) who argued that working long hours was popular amongst managers interviewed in his study because it was encouraged by senior management. Additionally, supervisors and HR practitioners cited various instances which suggest that working long hours was mainly of workers' own volition in order to signify commitment.

Like other research on work and family in Africa, narratives suggesting conflict were constructed by the working mothers, HR practitioners and supervisors, although the support from organisations was also acknowledged, which represents a departure from earlier accounts on work and family in Africa (Akanji, 2012; 2013). It is useful to note that, although the presence of conflict was acknowledged by working mothers, most of the mothers still expressed positive feelings and narrated a sense of fulfilment experienced at work. This might not be unconnected with the sector used in the study, oil and gas, which is one of the highest-paying sectors in Nigeria, with additional benefits for employees. The maintenance of minimum global standards by multinational companies operating within Nigeria also implies that some of the best global workplace practices have been transported from other countries into the Nigerian workplace.

On the individual level, however, although a general feeling of conflict was described in the narratives of working mothers, a deeper analysis of the

interviews based on gender role identity suggests that working mothers with a traditional gender ideology experience more work-family conflict and family-work conflict. This was mainly because they would rather attend to family issues personally, even when those events occurred during official working hours. The movement of families to urban centres, away from the purview of extended family members, gives the woman an additional level of independence, especially where they have the support of their husbands. As explained in the previous chapters, being a collectivist and traditional society, it is rare for women to be completely egalitarian in orientation. However, women that could be classified as being more egalitarian in view experienced less conflict, both from work and the family. This was because they would readily rely on the help of others and, where family members were unavailable, they were happy to outsource those chores to outsiders. As a result, their domestic roles were mainly supervisory. Evidence from a western study supports this. Crompton & Lyonette (2005) reported that women with a liberal gender ideology with less traditional division of domestic work between couples were happier with life in general and had more satisfaction with family life than women with a traditional gender ideology.

### **7.3.2 Gender stereotypes in the workplace**

Gender stereotyping has been extensively discussed in the literature, mainly from a negative perspective. For example, Betz et al. (2013) argued that awareness about gender stereotyping could affect girls and women negatively and could also have implications on their life outcomes. Chowwen

(2007) reported that females working in male dominated occupations in Nigeria were sometimes excluded from formal meetings. However, the possibility of any benefit being derived therefrom by women in Nigeria has not been explicitly explored. Evidence of negative effects of gender stereotyping like stalled career growth and women in leadership positions having their authority challenged by male subordinates were noted as one of the important themes in this study. However, other narratives in the interviews suggest that, although gender stereotyping could impact negatively on women's career advancement, it could also make it easier for supervisors and colleagues to understand, appreciate and accommodate the need for women to work flexibly or attend to emergency family issues during official work hours. Thus what women in lower level positions enjoy by way of accommodation from supervisors, women in leadership positions tend to lose by way of challenges to their authority.

### **7.3.3 The division of domestic labour**

This study adds to debates surrounding the gendered division of labour by investigating how the sharing of household chores and childcare is negotiated between couples in Nigeria and by comparing the extent of sharing in Nigeria with some of the evidence from advanced economies. Traditionally, economic activities outside the home have been viewed as a male responsibility, while household chores and childcare-related responsibilities have been socially constructed as feminine roles. Research has identified that, with increasing female labour force participation rates,

women are devoting less time and men are devoting more time to housework and childcare activities, although women continue to do the bulk of domestic chores (Bianchi et al., 2000; Bianchi et al., 2012). Recent research in the UK, however, has provided additional evidence that, although traditional gendered expectations and behaviours still persist amongst working families, many men and women support a more equal sharing when both partners are working (Lyonette & Crompton, 2015). Since these investigations were mostly conducted in Western countries, they leave open the question of how domestic chores and childcare are negotiated amongst working families in most parts of Africa, societies where patriarchy remains prevalent. By combining the review of literature on the division of domestic tasks as well as analysing narratives from the interviews comprehensively, the researcher was able to conceptualise arguments that might be responsible for an unequal distribution of household chores in Nigeria. In addressing this gap, activities within the home were explored by asking open-ended questions which provided the opportunity to detect “*who does what*” within the household.

First, like findings in Western economies, evidence from this study show that men in dual earner families are giving more support, mostly emotional, to their spouses. However, evidence of sharing of household chores by men with their partners has been rather small or in most cases non-existent, when compared with that reported in Western economies. Unlike the findings of Lyonette & Crompton (2015), where respondents were in favour of equal sharing of domestic chores, most women in this study were more

traditional in their views and did not have a problem with the status quo (women doing the bulk of domestic chores). Not only were working mothers comfortable with the gendered division of labour but they also did not see the need for a more equal sharing. Apart from the role of institutions in enshrining patriarchal values within Nigerian society, a few of the mothers interviewed attributed the very slow embrace of equal sharing of domestic chores between couples to the availability and low cost of domestic help. This argument is supported by Lyonette & Crompton (2015:35) who argued that the use of the services of domestic help reduces the burden of housework but “removes the necessity for any change in male behaviour”.

A second insight is that the positions of working mothers within their workplaces (whether in top, middle or lower management), or the type of company they work in (multinational or indigenous), did not affect the division of housework between couples. This finding supports the ‘doing gender’ theory which posits that, irrespective of the level of earnings, gender is produced in everyday activities. This may be due in part to the persistent positive societal view in Africa towards marriage, procreation and family responsibilities and the support that patriarchy gets from various institutional structures (Aryee, 2005).

A third insight regarding the sharing of household chores is that, unlike the situation in western economies where the services of domestic helps or au pairs are mostly engaged by upper or middle class families, while out-of-home childcare is the norm for working class families, findings from this study show that all working mothers interviewed had used one form of

outsourcing, either within or outside the family, and the use of day care was not the norm. This might not be unrelated to the strong family support enjoyed by working families and the low cost of hiring domestic help in Africa. However, one of the HR practitioners interviewed discussed how security challenges due to kidnapping in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria is making working mothers want to do activities like the daily drop-off and pick-up of their children personally which were initially being outsourced. As such, this situation is forcing companies to evaluate how working mothers' needs for work flexibility could be accommodated to help them balance work and home responsibilities. As such, when compared with working mothers in western societies, what working families in Nigeria lose in the form of government support, they gain by way of family support. Increased job demands and childcare responsibilities for working families with little or no government support have also resulted in schools providing more childcare support to parents, with some making their operational hours fit around the schedule of dual earner couples by operating till around 9pm.

Apart from the sharing of domestic responsibilities, this research also made some contributions in the area of working mothers' coping strategies. This will be discussed in the next section.

#### **7.3.4 Coping strategies**

Coping strategies of working mothers have been discussed, using Greenhaus & Beutell's (1985) sources of conflict model as the theoretical framework. The bulk of working mothers' coping strategies centred around



drawing support from family, relatives, supervisors and colleagues. As with earlier studies (Okafor & Amayo, 2006; Okonkwo, 2014; Aryee, 2005), support from the family was key and seems to be the preferred option for most mothers. The use of external sources of help was also apparent and included a combination of outsourcing particular tasks to specific help (e.g. childcare to nanny, laundry to drycleaners and transportation needs to drivers) while some working mothers outsourced only specific tasks (e.g. house cleaning). All working mothers relied on one form of help or another to cope with the conflicts between work and family responsibilities.

Within the Nigerian context, working mothers mostly adjusted their schedules to fit into the organisational needs. This finding was also reported in a study carried out in Ghana (Waterhouse, 2013). Apart from the support given by others, working mothers also re-scheduled and prioritised housework and household activities as much as possible, given the inefficiencies in system services. For example, mothers talked about bulk cooking during the weekends to reduce cooking times during the week but this was constrained by an erratic power supply because regular electricity was needed for storage. Also working mothers considered living close to their workplaces as a coping strategy to reduce stress and commuting time. However, this meant paying higher rental fees because accommodation in most business districts in Nigeria comes at a premium. More insights about working mothers' coping strategies will be discussed in the remaining part of this section. This will include other forms of support provided by their employers (flexible working arrangements) as well as personal strategies

(application of management principles to home activities and the role of spirituality as a coping strategy).

### ***Making use of employer supports***

It is not sufficient to compare work-life policies across cultures without understanding why these policies were introduced by organisations in different contexts (Kossek & Ollier-Malaterre, 2013). The definitions and perceptions of WLB discussed by participants in this study were rather broad. This contrasts with the UK where definitions tend to centre upon working time and workplace flexibility options like part-time working, working from home and flexible start and end times (Fagan, 2014; Fagan et al., 2012). Within the Nigerian context, WLB meant helping employees find the right balance between work and other aspects of their lives; anything that will help management to achieve that was explored and termed WLB policies.

Increased female participation in the workforce, single mothers, an ageing population and the re-negotiation of social roles have necessitated the embrace of work-life policies in developed economies (Kramar & Syed, 2012). However, findings from this study show that companies operating within the oil and gas sector in Nigeria embrace WLB to enhance employee well-being and to comply with the Nigerian Labour Act. This supports the arguments of institutional theorists about pressures from government influencing the behaviour of organisations (Den Dulk et al., 2013; Ollier-Malaterre, Valcour, Den Dulk & Kossek, 2013). In addition, multinationals

have embraced this concept in order to conform to minimum global standards at subsidiary locations. Just like previous studies that have discussed WLB policies in Nigerian organisations (Mordi et al., 2013; Ojo et al., 2014a; Mordi & Ojo, 2011), this study found evidence of policies around maternity leave, annual leave, career breaks, provision of crèches, and limited flexible working, amongst others. Planning for and ensuring that employees take their full leave entitlement has been reported in both multinational and indigenous companies by working mothers, supervisors and HR practitioners. Apart from the few policies that benefitted working mothers like maternity leave and the one hour break to nurse their baby after resumption from maternity leave, other support discussed during the interviews mainly involved informal workplace practices, e.g., the accommodation of the needs of working mothers to respond to urgent family responsibilities while at work and caring for a child who is unwell.

Due to the availability of government funded and well-maintained social services in western economies, there is a lower expectation for organisations to provide the infrastructural facilities necessary for business efficiency. This study shows that the situation in Nigeria is different because of inefficient infrastructural facilities and limited government support. As such, running a business can be very challenging for employers. Findings from this study show that multinationals have a more standardised and robust policy, whereas in the indigenous companies, most of the support which working mothers benefited from was usually informal and not standardised, as they tended to be dealt with on a case-to-case basis.

Again, the communal societal orientation was reflected in the workplace, with evidence of supervisors showing a lot of support and empathy for working mothers, especially with the general acceptance that domestic and parental responsibilities remain primarily with the mother.

Culture has been recognised as having an effect on organisational human resource practices in Nigeria (Ovadjie & Ankomah, 2001). This study offers several insights about workplace flexibility in Nigeria which have not been extensively discussed. Although flexible working arrangements available in advanced economies are not prevalent in Nigeria, a key insight is that companies continue to provide “perks” (e.g., an official car and driver, car allowance, provision of houses, housing allowance, generator and generator allowance) to cover up for the infrastructural inefficiencies in the system (Ovadjie & Ankomah, 2001). Multinational companies provide perks that are aimed at reducing the stress that workers experience because of the inefficiencies of the infrastructural amenities in Nigeria. For example, companies provide monetised benefits (e.g., generator and fuel allowance to reduce the stress of an unstable power supply), the provision of health insurance schemes (due to the unavailability of a world-class, government-funded healthcare system) and club membership for recreation. One of the important findings from this study was that, apart from the minimum global standards meant to be maintained by subsidiaries of multinational companies, different locations have different policies based on the labour law, the culture and other prevalent workplace practices at each of the subsidiary locations. In support of previous research on the transfer of the

communal African culture to the workplace (Aryee, 2005; Ovadje & Ankomah, 2001), evidence from this study also shows that companies demonstrate solidarity with the communal belief within Nigerian society. For example, in recognising the communal culture in Nigeria and the importance that families attach to ceremonies and family gatherings (Aryee, 2005), companies have standard policies around financial support to cover wedding and burial expenses.

A second insight regarding the provision of flexible working arrangements in Nigeria is the high cost of operations by companies. The failure of the government of Nigeria to provide adequate infrastructural amenities has been discussed in earlier studies to be a source of conflict for workers (Akanji, 2012; 2013). However, evidence from this study suggests that it is also a burden for companies operating in the country. As workers continue to complain about bad roads, long commuting times to and from work, as well as unstable electricity, companies are also struggling to survive in an environment where they are saddled with the responsibility of providing basic amenities from the company's financial resources. Narratives from this study show that companies have to undertake capital-intensive projects like the provision of infrastructural facilities (e.g., water, electricity and sometimes construction of good roads) to create an environment that is conducive for their business transactions. As such, based on companies' profitability objectives and the capital expenditure required to maintain their businesses in Nigeria, the resources that will be committed to the provision of flexible working arrangements are limited.

A third insight is that, although the kind of flexibility and benefits offered to employees might differ from those available in advanced economies, it could be misleading to assume that companies are not responsive to employee needs. Findings from this study support previous studies in Africa (Akanji, 2013; Oludayo et al., 2015) and other emerging economies (Rajadhyaksha & Velgach, 2015) about limited government support to working families. However, while support for working mothers could be argued to be limited, evidence demonstrated that companies do provide some help to workers, although this might be different from that offered in advanced economies. Furthermore, reconciling the fact that employees in Nigeria enjoy various monetised benefits as part of their package (Ovadjie & Ankomah, 2001) and the additional costs that companies incur on capital projects because of infrastructural inefficiency in Nigeria, the provision of additional support for working families might not be a priority. This is because other sources of help like support from family, relatives or domestic help are readily available.

The introduction of FWAs in advanced economies was primarily to encourage women to engage in paid employment outside the home. However, evidence of an urgent need for childcare support from employers in Nigeria by working families was neither seen in this study nor was it reported in earlier studies. This serves as additional evidence that FWAs and WLB policies and practices are not generalisable and might not be effective in reducing the conflicts, stresses and strains experienced by working mothers across cultures, unless they accommodate the specific

needs of the workers affected. This synchronises with Aryee's (2005:274) argument that formal support might not play a significant role in reducing WLC in sub-Saharan Africa. Apart from the workplace support received by working mothers, over time they had also developed some personal coping strategies which will be discussed in the remaining part of this section.

### ***Applying management principles as a coping strategy***

This study adds to the evidence available in understanding individual and collective efforts aimed at reducing the stress experienced by working mothers. Research on coping strategies in Africa has primarily concentrated on social support from families (Ajayi et al., 2015; Akanji, 2012; 2013; Okonkwo, 2014) and other external sources of paid help (Aryee, 2005, Muasya, 2014). These studies, however, have not explored in detail skill transfer and the application of management principles between the work and home spheres as a coping strategy.

First, in coping with the stress associated with working, childcare and domestic responsibilities, working mothers were systematic in their approach by applying some management principles like planning, organising, time management, and prioritisation of tasks. Some household chores were done during the week while major chores were delayed until the weekend. These principles affected not only their activities, but also the activities of people they related with at home and at work.

Second, while evidence of prioritisation of household chores has been documented in Ghana, where time spent with children was given a higher

priority (Waterhouse, 2013), prioritisation in doing/outsourcing tasks or “who does what chores” has not been previously discussed. Just as companies aiming to maximise returns in strategic areas use the “shrinking core, expanding periphery” concept (Gulati & Kletter, 2009), some of the mothers tended to perform household chores which they perceived as “core” tasks, while outsourcing mundane tasks requiring less personal attention. These findings can therefore be a useful area which future researchers could explore. In addition to the personal strategies devised by mothers, the embrace of spirituality, which is the focus of the last part of this section, was another theme that emerged in the course of data analysis.

### ***Spirituality in the workplace***

This sub-section offers additional insights regarding the coping strategies used by working mothers. Research evidence has identified the concept of spirituality emerging in the workplace (Afsar, Badir, & Kiani, 2016; Garcia-Zamor, 2003; Paul et al., 2015) and discussion has centred around mindfulness and meditation in advanced economies (Allen, Eby, Conley, Williamson, Mancini & Mitchell, 2015). In Nigeria, however, documented evidence shows that spirituality has been mainly understood as being religious or having a religious affiliation (Mordi et al., 2013). Nigerians are religious and WLB is sometimes interpreted as having time for work and religious activities (Mordi et al., 2013). Additionally, literature shows that religion and belief in God provide succour during troubled times generally (Pierce, 2010). However, the role of spirituality and religion as a coping



strategy in navigating between the home and work spheres by working mothers remains under-researched.

A key insight from this study is the role that spirituality and belief in God play in providing succour to working mothers in coping with the stress associated with balancing home and work. The belief that a supreme being is in charge, directing their daily activities in the most appropriate way, was useful in providing support to working mothers.

### **7.3.5 Empirical contributions summarised**

This section provides a summary of themes discussed earlier in this section. More specifically, in exploring the WLC experiences of working mothers in the oil and gas sector in Nigeria, this study made particular contributions to the existing body of research which are discussed below:

First, the study provided evidence that suggests that the understanding of WLB within the Nigerian context is broader than the concept of work and work schedule flexibility discussed in WLB studies conducted in the UK (Fagan et al., 2012; Crompton et al., 2007). WLB policies and practices in Nigeria have focused on supports that can help employees find a balance between work and other aspects of their life while taking in consideration contextual infrastructural inefficiencies. Previous studies on coping strategies (Akanji, 2012; 2013; Muasya, 2014) in Nigeria have focused on individual strategies while neglecting supports (formal and informal) provided by either the organisation or other third parties apart from the

family (like the school). Coping strategies have been discussed in this thesis not only from the individual perspectives but also by discussing the support from employers and colleagues.

Second, previous studies reported that workers in Nigeria experience a high level of conflict. This study also presents evidence to show that working mothers in the oil and gas sector experience conflict, although the level of conflict reported by working mothers is less than that reported in previous studies (Mordi et al. 2013; Epie & Ituma, 2014). Evidence from this study show that working mothers also had positive feelings/ moments and had a sense of fulfilment. The existence of positive feelings at work has not been reported in earlier Nigerian studies. Using Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) sources of conflict model provided an opportunity to classify the conflicts experienced by working mothers using their particular categories (time, strain and behaviour based) and also provided a framework with which to classify the coping strategies used by working mothers. Previous studies in Africa either discussed conflicts more generally (Mordi et al., 2013) or discussed only one of these sources of conflict (Epie & Ituma, 2014; Okonkwo, 2014).

Thirdly, this study found evidence of a positive effect of gender stereotyping which is the increased ability of supervisors to understand and accommodate the need for working mothers to attend to family responsibilities during official work hours. The majority of studies on gender stereotyping conducted in Nigeria (Chovwen, 2007, Anugwom, 2009) and

advanced countries (e.g., English, 2003; Heilman, 2001) focus primarily on the negative effects. As such, the positive effect has not been reported in in African studies and it will be useful for researchers to investigate this further.

Fourthly, previous African studies in the field of work and family have explored the work sphere from different perspectives, although the home sphere has been somewhat neglected. The few studies available from Africa have shown that support from male partners within the household have been mostly emotional (Smit, 2002; Ajayi et al., 2015). This study adds to the debate by documenting that, unlike UK evidence which suggests that women crave for a more equal sharing of domestic labour (Lyonette and Crompton, 2015), working mothers in Nigeria see domestic and childcare related activities as their responsibility and do not necessarily acknowledge the need for their male partners to be more involved in domestic activities. Lastly, this study has contributed to existing knowledge about multinationals in Nigeria. In support of documented evidence of transfer of parent company policies to subsidiary locations, as documented earlier (Azolukwam and Perkins, 2009), evidence from this study also shows that in addition to standardised minimum global standards at various locations, multinationals operating in Nigeria also had context-specific policies based on the conditions of host countries' economic, security and social conditions. Multinationals appear to have more standardised, robust and better global practices than their indigenous counterparts.

#### **7.4 Theoretical/conceptual contributions**

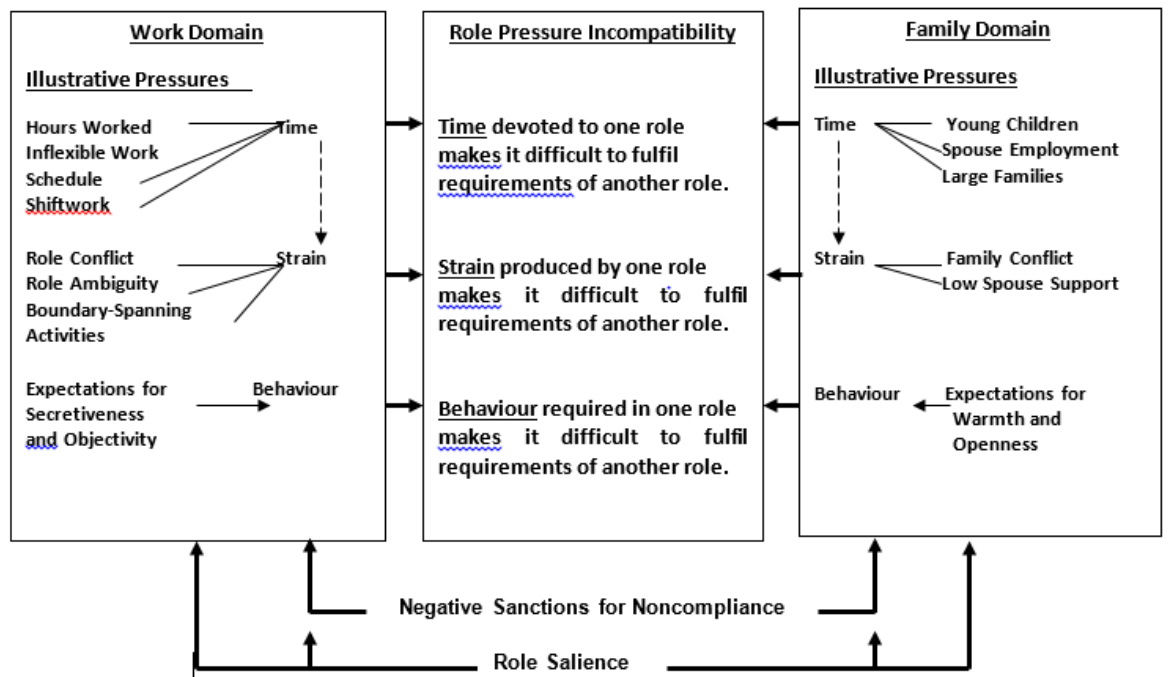
Empirical findings on WLC discussed in the last section do have potential theoretical implications that will be useful for future research in the field of work and family in Africa. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) developed a model that explained the sources of conflict when navigating between work and family roles: time-based, strain-based and behaviour-based sources of conflict. In terms of time-based conflict, this was linked to excessive work/family time conflict, commuting time, marriage, children and inflexible work schedules. Strain-based sources of conflict postulates that stressful events at work or within the family or lack of family support could lead to fatigue, irritability, tension and frustration. Behaviour-based conflict is identified as conflict occurring when role behaviour in one domain (e.g. work) conflicts with expectations in another role (e.g. family). The Greenhaus and Beutell sources of conflict model, however, did not expatiate on how each of these sources of conflict interact with each other. For example, how factors leading to time-based conflict could lead to strain for an employee or how the need to work long hours and overtime (time-based) by mothers could lead to their self-perception that work and family expectations differ because they were lacking in fulfilling their family responsibilities due to job demands (behaviour-based). This study demonstrates that factors that lead to time-based conflict like long working hours or commuting time could also lead to fatigue and stress for working mothers. This serves as a theoretical contribution of this study.

Secondly, the three sources of conflict proposed by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) in their model were found to be experienced by working mothers in the oil and gas sector in Nigeria. This model was useful as a guide during the literature review and the research design/analysis stage of this thesis. However, sources of conflict were discussed generally in Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) study without bearing in mind that the intensity of each source of conflict experienced may vary in different contexts based on the level of support from family and government and the challenges imposed by the environment. In this study, evidence of work-related sources of conflict was more apparent in indigenously owned companies where working long hours was prevalent. In both indigenous and multinational companies, however, long working hours were particularly prevalent in core operations, with, for example, female engineers sometimes having to go to the rig to monitor operations. In order to beat traffic caused by bad roads and inefficient road networks, working mothers tend to observe early wake-up/late bedtimes on a daily basis and spend long hours commuting to and from work. This remains a source of stress for many working mothers in Nigeria. However, easy access to family support meant that many families in Nigeria experience less family-related time-based and strain-based sources of conflict than their counterparts in advanced countries while work-related time/strain-based conflicts (based on infrastructural challenges and work inflexibility) were more intense. Contrary to reports from studies in advanced economies, but supported by an earlier study on strain-based

family interference with work in Nigeria (Okonkwo, 2014), only occasional accounts of family-related sources of conflict were reported in this study.

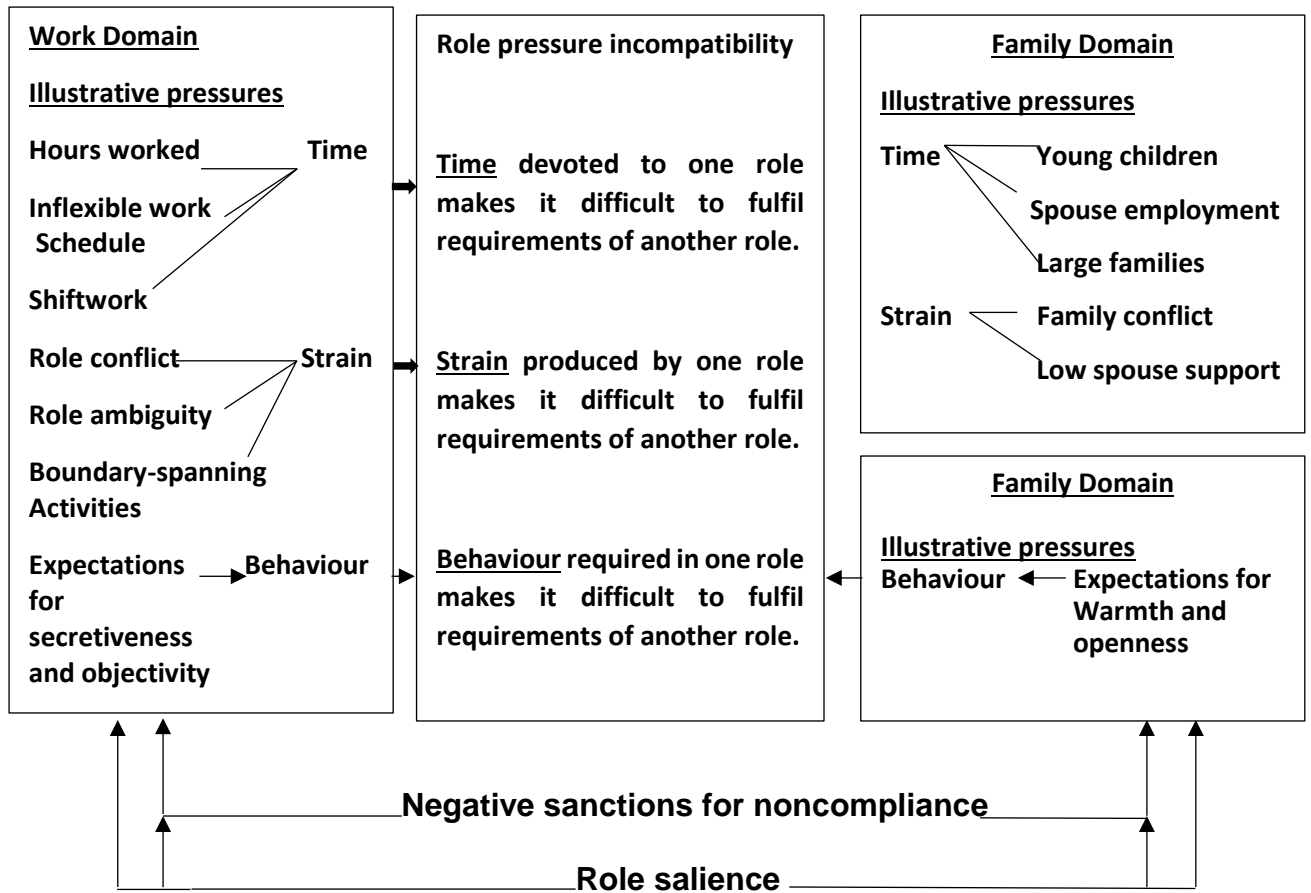
This study confirms the arguments of African researchers in the field of work and family who questioned the generalisability of theories developed in western economies and their subsequent applicability/transfer to emerging economies (Aryee, 2005; Epie and Ituma, 2014). This study extends existing knowledge by studying a previously studied concept in a western context and applying it in a non-western context. It should be noted that although the findings of this study show a gap in Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) sources of conflict model when applied in a non-western context, Greenhaus and Beutell's article was based on a review of over twenty articles on research conducted in western countries (unlike the small sample size of this study) and is thus more rigorous. This study can therefore not be generalised or used as a basis to change Greenhaus and Beutell's model unless further research in non-western contexts, especially Africa, is carried out and these studies provide more evidence to support the findings from this study. However, in order to aid further studies, Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) sources of conflict model has been adapted for emerging economies, based on the findings of this study:

Figure 7-1: Work-family role pressure incompatibility (original)



Source: (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985:78).

**Figure 7-2: Work-family role pressure incompatibility model (adapted for emerging economies)**



**Source: Adapted from Greenhaus and Beutell (1985:78)**

The adapted model shows a thicker arrow which depicts an intense work-related time-based and strain-based sources of conflict for working mothers in Nigeria (Epie and Ituma, 2014). Family-related time-based and strain-based sources of conflict are however depicted by a dashed line to signify a weaker effect of family as a source of conflict for working mothers; family has proven to be a resource within the African context (Okonkwo, 2014). Behaviour-based conflict however was presented using the same arrow that was used by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) because this source of conflict



has not been proven to be experienced with more or less intensity by working mothers in Nigeria, when compared with their peers in advanced countries.

### **7.5 Implications for government and companies**

The high level of stress reported to be experienced by residents in Nigeria, combined with one of the lowest life expectancy rates (52 years) in the world<sup>11</sup>, argues for changes to government regulations and company policies to support working mothers.

More specifically, on the part of the government, it would be useful to review and restructure laws regulating employment relationships in order to help working families to cope with the many challenges they face. This might not necessarily mean adopting regulations and practices from advanced economies, although a review of regulations in advanced economies, vis-à-vis discussions with major stakeholders, might be helpful in promulgating useful context-specific regulations to support working families.

Secondly, since both the literature and findings from this study suggest that environmental factors in Nigeria contribute to the stress experienced by working mothers, putting in place adequate infrastructural facilities will produce an environment that will be business-friendly, ultimately benefiting all the parties in the tripartite relationship: government, employers and employees. Having an environment that is conducive for business will not

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[http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.LE00.IN?order=wbapi\\_data\\_value\\_2013+wbapi\\_data\\_value+wbapi\\_data\\_value-last&sort=asc](http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.LE00.IN?order=wbapi_data_value_2013+wbapi_data_value+wbapi_data_value-last&sort=asc)

only attract more domestic and foreign investors, it will also reduce the cost of doing business for companies operating in Nigeria. Having done its own part, the government may find it easier to exert institutional pressures on companies to introduce various flexible working arrangements to suit the needs of working mothers and more broadly, working families.

Thirdly, bearing in mind that the burden of care work falls primarily on females and this serves as an impediment to the efficient use of the under-tapped talent of women, the government needs to do more to reduce some of these responsibilities, thereby providing an atmosphere where increases in the use of female talent could increase economic development. Apart from the provision of infrastructural facilities, it will be useful for government to explore different options to support working families, such as providing good childcare.

Ultimately, all these changes will increase Nigeria's GDP, stimulate employment, reduce poverty, reduce stress on workers and as such make them productive workers, and importantly, increase gender equality.

At the organisational level, a reduction in the costs of running businesses and a removal of the burden of providing basic infrastructural facilities means that there will be more financial resources to invest in employees. This may allow companies, both indigenous and multinationals, to tackle the challenges of working families in Nigeria and consider introducing more culturally-sensitive flexible working arrangements. For example, the challenge of traffic jams and long commuting hours might be tackled by

allowing employees to work remotely or investments could be made in developing alternative modes of transportation, like the rail system.

Finally, it could be useful to do a pilot test of some flexible working arrangements that have been successfully implemented in other countries or practices from companies in similar lines of business. The success or otherwise of the pilot could then be discussed with all stakeholders: employees, supervisors and HR practitioners. More specifically, rather than providing general employee policies and other workplace flexibility options for all categories of employees, as is currently operational in Nigeria, it may be useful to categorise employees based on their particular needs: working mothers, fathers, single parents and employees not in any kind of relationship.

This research will be beneficial as an addition to HRM knowledge, healthy living, and social cohesion. It will be specifically useful to government and human resource practitioners in making informed decisions about HR policies intended to benefit employees.

## **7.6 Limitations of the study**

As mentioned in previous studies on work and family in emerging economies, this study was based on data generated from narratives constructed by women about their activities, their perceptions about career aspirations, the division of domestic tasks and childcare-related activities (Ramu, 1987, Smit, 2002). However, it will be useful if future studies could

concentrate on the perceptions of male respondents regarding these issues. Fathers may have their own difficulties and may provide new insights into other areas for future research. This study interviewed the working mothers without having an opportunity to interview their husbands and compare notes. Like previous studies, It is possible that men married to professional women might experience more family-work conflict, compared to their parents with a traditional gender orientation (Gilbert, 2014, Ekert-Jaffé, 2011). This would provide an opportunity to compare findings from mothers and fathers, as has been achieved in some studies in advanced economies (Fuegen et al., 2004; Chesley, 2011).

The focus of this research was the oil and gas sector in Nigeria. The major actors in this sector are multinational companies who adhere to global standard employment practices which might surpass the standard in other sectors in Nigeria dominated by indigenous operators. This implies that the findings from this study might not be generalisable to other sectors in Nigeria. This might explain the variation in the level of conflict reported in this study, compared with previous research on the topic where higher levels of WLC were reported (Epie & Ituma, 2014; Mordi & Ojo, 2011). In addition, comparing policies across sectors might be insightful into understanding why some policies and informal practices thrive in some sectors or economies, while they may be impractical in others.

Investment in large scale, country-wide data collection on the activities of women at home and at work by government or any of its agencies charged with data collection could lead to the collection of more generalisable data.

The sample in this study is rather small to generalise and might not be representative of the home and working lives of working mothers at different phases of their career. The sample is also relatively homogenous as it consists of graduates who are professionals in their field and is unlikely to portray the lives of less-educated women or women operating in the informal sector whose activities are not regulated by legislation. Additionally, only women with children were interviewed and it will be useful to understand the home and working lives of other women and men, such as those unmarried and those without children, as well as non-heterosexual employees. Their challenges might differ, based on their interests outside of work.

## **7.7 Future research**

Research into the work-family interface and workplace flexibility in Nigeria has concentrated on big organisations like the banks, the educational sector and manufacturing. Most research on work and family has been conducted in large organisations which can afford to have people-friendly policies in place. The call has been made to understand how smaller businesses are coping and whether there are differences in the challenges that employees and organisations face (Kossek & Lambert, 2005).

Furthermore, unlike in advanced countries where there is evidence about how different categories of workers have been navigating work and other aspects of their lives, research on work and family in Africa has concentrated on workers in general or on working mothers in particular.

Although it could be argued that there has been various research into the work and family activities of working mothers in Nigeria however this research has contributed to knowledge by furthering our understanding of how division of domestic labour is negotiated among working families in Nigeria. Furthermore, this study has also clarified that unlike in advanced countries where work and family related (time-based, strain-based and behaviour-based) sources of conflict have been identified, the sources of conflict prevalent in the oil and gas sector in Nigeria are mainly work-related with the family providing support to cushion the effect of family-based sources of conflict. Finally, although the negative effects of gender stereotyping have been identified in Nigeria just like in advanced economies, reports from this study suggest that gender stereotyping does have some positive effects as well, especially for women occupying mid-level or low level positions in organisations. This is because gender stereotyping reinforces traditional gender division, thus making it easier for supervisors to accommodate the needs of working mothers.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix I: Interview guide for pilot study**

#### **For working mothers**

##### **General introduction**

I am a PhD student at the University of Warwick. My research is about investigating work-life balance policies available in Nigerian organisations and the strategies that are mostly taken up by employees.

Information which can make the data traceable..., like names will not be taken and your right to confidentiality is protected. The information gathered in the course of this research will be used solely for that purpose. Additionally, information gathered will be listened to by me and my supervisors only.

If in the course of this interview, you don't want to continue, you have the right to stop me. If you have any reservations after the interview about information disclosed, you can call me up. If you think there is anybody that will like to speak with me, I will be glad to speak with the person.

I am interviewing you because you are a working mother with at least a child under the age of 11.

##### **Section A**

1. Please, can you tell me what your typical working day is like?
  - Getting the children ready
  - Commuting time
  - Picking the children from school
  - Types of household chores. Who does these?
  - Working hours
  - Hours spent at work
  - Hours spent doing household chores
2. What do you understand by work-life balance? Do you think it is necessary?
3. Do you work weekends?
  - Number of hours
  - Other activities
4. Tell me about how you manage your work and family?
  - Household chores- Number of hours invested in this per week
  - Children- child care arrangements in place

- Children in boarding schools
  - Long day-care, after-school care
  - . informal ones like relatives/extended families, neighbours& friends, nannies, babysitters, paid house cleaners, house-helps, cooks etc.
- Other sources of help. Maybe from relatives, outsourcing or house-helps
  - Management strategies
  - Care of elderly people
5. Are these extended families from within or outside Lagos?
  6. What facilities have been made available by your employer
    - day-care facilities
    - casual leave
    - staff buses
    - personal/parental counselling service
    - provision of gym facilities ...
  7. If these facilities are available, will you take it up or have you taken them up?
  8. Are there specific policies within your workplace which may help or hinder your progression/your functioning as a mother?
  9. How do you spend your time when you are not at work?
  10. Can you, in one sentence describe how you feel most times, after each day?
  11. Do you think there are things which you learn at work which you can also apply at home and vice-versa?
    - team work
    - planning,
    - goal setting
    - time management
  12. Now, at least, you know the aim and scope of my research, Is there any other thing that you think might be relevant to my research that I have not actually talked about?

## **Section B**

1. How old are you?
2. Are you married, single, divorced, a single mother or widowed?
3. How many children do you have and what are their ages?
4. What level are you in the organisation?- Low, middle or top

5. What sector of the economy do you work?-Telecommunication, Oil and gas, bank, manufacturing, education...
6. What tribe are you from?

**Thank you for your time; it has been nice speaking with you.**

### **For HR managers**

Good morning, my name is Mariam Gbajumo-Sheriff. I am a PhD student from the University of Warwick. My PhD is about investigating work life balance practices that are available in Nigerian organisations and the strategies that are mostly taken up by employees. For this research, I don't intend to take any information that will be traceable to you like your company name, your personal name. Your right to confidentiality is protected and the information gathered in the course of this research will be used for that purpose. The information gathered will be listened to, by me and my supervisors. If in the course of the interview you think there is anything you have said that you will not want me to put in the final report, then you can call me up and I will be glad to do that. If you think you want to stop at any point in time, you can stop me, that's ok.

I am interviewing you because you are in the HR department of the company you work for.

### **Section A**

1. What are the work-life balance policies you have?
2. What is your concept of work-life balance?
3. Do you have policies are geared towards helping employees achieve work-life balance?
  - child-care benefits
  - maternity leave, paternity leave and parental leave
  - hours of work/flexible working
  - distances between employees' homes and their workplace
  - etc

4. How much are your HR Policies linked to the specific issues which workers face in Nigeria? For example infrastructure decay, traffic jams etc, lack of government provided day-care centres etc.
5. Now, at least, you know the aim and scope of my research, Is there any other thing that you think might be relevant to my research that I have not actually talked about?

### **Section B**

1. Can you tell me what you do on a daily basis, please?
2. What is the ratio of men to women within the company?
3. What sector of the economy does your company belong to?

**Thank you for your time; it has been nice speaking with you.**

## Appendix II: Main study- Interview guide for working mothers

Interview Number:

### General introduction

I am a PhD student at the University of Warwick. My research is about investigating work-life balance policies available in Nigerian organisations and the strategies that are mostly taken up by employees.

Information which can make the data traceable..., like names will not be taken and your right to confidentiality is protected. The information gathered in the course of this research will be used solely for that purpose. Additionally, information gathered will be listened to by me and my supervisors only.

If in the course of this interview, you don't want to continue, you have the right to stop me. If you have any reservations after the interview about information disclosed, you can call me up. If you think there is anybody that will like to speak with me, I will be glad to speak with the person.

I am interviewing you because you are a working mother with at least a child under the age of 11. These questions are semi- structured because I don't believe I have all the right questions. It will therefore require you to be as detailed as possible.

### Section A

1. Please, can you tell me a bit about your work and what your typical working day is like... like a Monday? From when you wake up till when you sleep at night.
    - Getting the children ready
    - Commuting time
    - Picking the children from school
    - Types of household chores. Who does these chores?
    - Working hours
    - Hours spent at work
    - Hours spent doing household chores
  2. How much pressure do you go through at work?
- 
3. Is there any prospect of the pressure at work changing in the future?  
For the better or worse?

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4. What do you understand by work-life balance? Do you think it is necessary?
5. Are you doing something that will get you a better work-life balance in the future? Any trade-offs? Please, explain.

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6. Describe your relationship at work with colleagues and working as a team? Give an example of an occasion when they had to give you preference over others/take some responsibilities off you because you are a working mother.

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7. Describe your relationship at work with your supervisor? Give examples of an occasion when he/she had to give you some preferences because you are a working mother.

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8. Is there anybody that has been helpful in helping you balance work and life?

Yes ☐ No ☐

9. If your answer to 7 is yes, please explain.

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10. How happy have you been at work?

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11. When do you wake up on a working day?

12. When do you sleep on a working day? \_\_\_\_\_

13. How many children do you have? \_\_\_\_\_



14. What are their ages? \_\_\_\_\_
15. Tell me about how you manage your work and family? Who gets the children ready for school?
- Household chores- Number of hours invested in this per week (week day and weekend separately)
  - Children- child care arrangements in place
    - Children in boarding schools
    - Long day-care, after-school care
    - . informal ones like relatives/extended families, neighbours & friends, nannies, babysitters, paid house cleaners, house-helps, cooks etc.
  - Other sources of help. Maybe from relatives, outsourcing or house-helps
  - Management strategies
16. Do you have to take care of elderly people on a daily basis? If yes, how do you do that when at work?
17. If you use extended families, are they from within or outside Lagos?
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
18. How long does it take you from your home to your place of work?
- \_\_\_\_\_
19. How long does it take you from your workplace to your home after the close of work? \_\_\_\_\_
20. Your working hours are from when to when?
- \_\_\_\_\_
21. What arrangements do you have in place for picking the children from school?
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
22. Who does the household chores?
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
23. Does your husband help too? Yes ☐ No ☐
24. If your answer to question 22 is yes, expatiate on this by listing specific tasks that he does

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25. If you answer to question 22 is no, explain why.

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26. How many hours do you spend doing household chores during a working day? \_

27. How many hours do you spend doing household chores during the weekend? Saturday and Sunday separately? \_\_\_\_\_

28. Do you work weekends? Yes ☐ No ☐

29. If yes, how many often? \_\_\_\_\_

30. How many hours do you put in on weekends? \_\_\_\_\_

31. What other activities do you engage in when you are not at work?

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32. What do you understand by the term “work-life balance”?

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33. Do you think it is necessary? \_\_\_\_\_ Why?

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Nanny and house-help are defined here in order to understand the researcher’s interpretation.

**Nanny- a person, typically a woman, employed to look after a child in its own home.**

**House-help: a person who is employed to perform domestic task in a household.**

34. What childcare arrangements do you have in place? Please tick all that apply.

Children in boarding school ☐ After-school care ☐ ☐  
Nannies

Relatives/extended family ☐ House-help ☐ Cook ☐

Neighbours & friends ☐ House cleaners ☐

Someone taking on the role of both nanny and house-help ☐

35. Have you outsourced any household chore? Yes ☐ No ☐

36. If yes, explain.

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37. Do you have to take care of elderly people on a daily basis? Yes ☐ ☐  
No

38. If yes, how do you do that when at work?

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39. What facilities have been made available by your employer?

- ☐ day-care facilities
- ☐ casual leave
- ☐ staff buses
- ☐ company funded healthcare facilities
- ☐ personal/parental counselling service
- ☐ provision of gym facilities ...

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40. For those facilities unavailable, which would you have taken up?

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41. If you are not making use of these facilities, is it because you don't want to show yourself as "different" from the men, or weak in some way? Please, explain.

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42. Are there specific policies within your workplace which may help or hinder your progression/your functioning as a mother? Give examples.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

43. How do you spend your time when you are not at work?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

44. Can you, in one sentence describe how you feel most times, after each day?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

45. Do you think there are things which you learnt at work which you can also apply at home and vice-versa? Please give examples.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

46. Is there any other thing that you think might be relevant to my research that I have not actually talked about?

## Section B

7. How old are you?

18-20 ☐

21-25 ☐

26-30 ☐

31-35 ☐

36-40 ☐

41-45 ☐

50-55 ☐

56-60 ☐

8. What is your marital status?

Married ☐

single ☐

divorced ☐

single mother ☐

☐

widowed

9. How many children do you have? \_\_\_\_ What are their ages?

\_\_\_\_\_

10. What level are you in the organisation? - Low ☐

middle ☐

☐

top

11. Which department are you?

12. What tribe are you from?

**Thank you for your time.**

## **Appendix III: Main study- Interview guide for HR Managers**

### **Section A**

6. What are the work-life balance policies you have?
7. What is your concept of work-life balance?
8. Do you think it is necessary?      Yes ☐      No ☐
9. Please explain your answer to question 3.
10. Do you have policies are geared towards helping employees achieve work-life balance?
  - child-care benefits
  - daycare
  - maternity leave, paternity leave and parental leave
  - Counselling services
  - hours of work/flexible working
  - distances between employees' homes and their workplace etc.- staff buses
11. How much are your HR Policies linked to the specific issues which workers face in Nigeria? For example infrastructure decay, traffic jams etc., lack of government provided day-care centres etc.
12. Are there any specific policies or practices (specify whether it is documented or not) aimed at helping working mothers with young children to manage their different responsibilities?
13. In the future, are there any work-life balance initiatives that the company is considering?
14. What do you think are the impediments to work-life balance more generally in Nigeria?
15. Now, at least, you know the aim and scope of my research, Is there any other thing that you think might be relevant to my research that I have not actually talked about?

### **Section B**

4. Can you tell me what you do on a daily basis, please?
5. What is the ratio of men to women within the company?
6. What sector of the economy does your company belong to?

**Thank you for your time; it has been nice speaking with you.**

## Appendix IV: main study- Interview guide for supervisors

1. What do you understand by work-life balance?

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2. Do you think it is necessary? Yes ☐ No ☐

3. If your answer to question 2 is no, please explain.

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4. If your answer to question 2 is yes, please explain.

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5. Have you encountered any difficulties in managing people with family responsibilities? Yes ☐ No ☐

6. If yes, explain and give examples.

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7. What has been your greatest difficulty in managing people with family responsibilities?

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8. How difficult or easy is it for other team members (or other co-workers) when they work with working mothers? Give examples.

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9. Have you had any occasion when you have had to give preference to someone because she was a working mother? ☒ Yes ☐ No

10. If your answer to question 8 is yes, please explain.

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11. If your answer to question 8 is no, please explain.

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12. What would make things easier for you as a supervisor in managing working mothers?

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**Thank you for your time.**



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